

Surah al-Qaṣaṣ

Central Theme and Relationship with the Previous *Sūrah*

This *sūrah* is the counterpart of *Sūrah al-Naml*, the previous *sūrah*. Hence, there is no basic difference between the central themes of the two. In the previous *sūrah*, only that part of the account of Moses (sws) was described that was related to assigning him as a prophet and then being sent to the Pharaoh (sws). In this *sūrah*, the complete details of this account are mentioned, beginning from his birth to being given the Torah. There was only a veiled reference about the Israelites in the previous *sūrah*. In this *sūrah*, the attitude of both their evil and the righteous elements is discussed in detail, which shows that by that time the Jews had openly come to the fore.

The account of Moses (sws) has been narrated to Prophet Muḥammad (sws) for the very reason the tale of Joseph (sws) was narrated to him in *Sūrah Yūsuf*: in the mirror of these tales, Muḥammad (sws) is able to fully observe how majestically the Almighty protects His messengers and how He makes His schemes materialise. Moreover, his opponents are also able to see the fate they will finally meet if they continue with their attitude.

The Quraysh are explained in this *sūrah* to that just as the Almighty had sent Moses (sws) as a Messenger to the Pharaoh and his people, in a similar way, He has sent this Messenger and this Book to them. The purpose is that they become fully aware of God's guidance and are not left with any excuse to continue to follow their wrong ways.

The Israelites are told that since Muḥammad (sws) was absent at the time, it was not possible that he would have been able to know about certain aspects of the life of Moses (sws) which they themselves are not correctly aware of and that too with such detail. They are further told that they had lost the guidance the Almighty had revealed to them. So, He wanted to revive this guidance for them through His messenger who conclusively communicated the truth to them.

The Prophet Muḥammad (sws) is assured that he has not demanded this Qur'ān from God. On the contrary, it is God Who has entrusted it to him. So, when God has made him responsible for it, he should carry out his obligation while disregarding the opposition of the opponents and the difficulties of his path. The God Who has burdened him with this task will help him at every step and make him succeed.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-43): This section describes the account of Moses (sws) from his birth till the time he was given the Torah.

Verses (44-46): The discourse shifts towards the Prophet (sws). He is told that he was not aware of the various phases and places of the tale of Moses (sws). God made him aware of them so that His *sharī'ah* is revived once again through the Prophet (sws). This is God's favour to him and to his nation too, to which no messenger had come until then. God wanted to conclusively convey the truth to them through him before he punishes them.

Verses (44-46): It is shown how the Quraysh opposed this call of God and how they demanded

miracles from him to prove his prophet hood. They asked him to show these miracles to them the way Moses (sws) did to his people. This demand was implanted in their minds by the Jews. An answer is given to this demand that silences them. True People of the Book, who, in spite of the pandemonium created by their nation, were backing the Prophet (sws) and the call of the Qur'ān are praised.

Verses (56-61): The Prophet (sws) is given assurance and an answer is given to the Quraysh to allay their fear that if they accept this call, their political and economic clout will be totally shattered.

Verses (62-75): The baseless nature of the idols and intercessors of the Quraysh is highlighted whom the latter regarded as the means of all their successes and feared that if they left them, they would be destroyed.

Verses (76-84): The fate of a capitalist Jew is mentioned. The purpose is to show that all favours are granted by God but wretched people think that they are the result of their own ability and of the blessings of their idols.

Verses (85-88): The Prophet (sws) is urged to remain steadfast on his stance and disregard his opponents. The God Who has burdened him with the responsibility of communicating and disseminating the Qur'ān will help him in every difficulty that he encounters.

Text and Translation

Section 1: Verses (1-46)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

طَسَمَ ۝ تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ ۝ تَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِ مِنْ نَبَأِ مُوسَىٰ وَفِرْعَوْنَ بِالْحَقِّ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ۝ إِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ عَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَجَعَلَ أَهْلَهَا شِيَعًا يَسْتَضِعُّ طَائِفَةً مِنْهُمْ يُذِيبُهُمْ بِأَنْبَاءِهِمْ وَيَسْتَحْيِي نِسَاءَهُمْ ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ۝ وَنُرِيدُ أَنْ نَبُنِيَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اسْتَضَعُّوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَنَجْعَلَهُمْ آيَةً ۚ وَنَجْعَلَهُمُ الْوَارِثِينَ ۝ وَتَبْكُنَ لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَنُرَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ وَجُنُودَهُمَا مِنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَحْذَرُونَ ۝ وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمِّ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَرْضِعِيهِ ۖ فَاِذَا خَفَتْ عَلَيْهِ فَأَلْقِيهِ فِي الْيَمِّ وَلَا تَخَافِي وَلَا تَحْزَنِي ۚ إِنَّا رَأَيْنَاهُ إِلَيْنَا ۖ وَجَاعِلُهُ مِنْ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ۝ فَالْتَقَطَهُ آلُ فِرْعَوْنَ لِيَكُونَ لَهُمْ عَدُوًّا وَحَزَنًا ۚ إِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ وَجُنُودَهُمَا كَانُوا خَاطِئِينَ ۝ وَقَالَتِ امْرَأَتُ فِرْعَوْنَ قَرَّتْ عَيْنِي لِىَ وَلَكَ ۚ لَا تَقْتُلُوهُ ۚ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَنْفَعَنَا أَوْ نَتَّخِذَهُ وَلَدًا ۚ وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ۝ وَأَصْبَحَ فُؤَادُ أُمِّ مُوسَىٰ فَرِحًا ۚ إِنَّ كَادَتْ لِتَشْبِدَ بِهِ لَوْلَا أَنْ رَبَطْنَا عَلَىٰ قَلْبِهَا لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۝ وَقَالَتْ لِأُخْتِهِ قُصِّيهِ ۖ فَبَصَّرَتْ بِهِ عَنْ جُنُبٍ وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ۝ وَحَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِ الْمَرَاضِعَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَقَالَتْ هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ أَهْلِ بَيْتٍ يَكْفُلُونَهُ لَكُمْ وَهُمْ لَهُ نَصْحُونَ ۝ فَرَدَدْنَاهُ إِلَىٰ أُمِّهِ كَيْ تَقَرَّ عَيْنُهَا وَلَا تَحْزَنَ ۚ وَنَعْلَمُ أَنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ۝ وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَاسْتَوَىٰ آتَيْنَاهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا ۚ وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ ۝ وَدَخَلَ الْمَدِينَةَ عَلَىٰ حِينٍ غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ أَهْلِهَا فَوَجَدَ فِيهَا رَجُلَيْنِ يَقْتَتِلَانِ ۚ هَذَا مِنْ شِيعَتِهِ وَهَذَا مِنْ عَدُوِّهِ ۖ فَاسْتَغَاثَهُ الَّذِي مِنْ شِيعَتِهِ عَلَى الَّذِي مِنْ عَدُوِّهِ ۖ فَوَكَرَهُ مُوسَىٰ فَقَطَّعَ عَلَيْهِ ۚ قَالَ هَذَا مِنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ ۚ إِنَّهُ عَدُوٌّ مُّضِلٌّ مُّبِينٌ ۝ قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي ۖ فَاغْفِرْ لِي ۖ فَغَفَرَ لَهُ ۚ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ۝ قَالَ رَبِّ بِمَا أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ فَلَنْ أَكُونَ ظَهِيرًا لِلْجَنَّةِ مِمَّنْ ۖ فَاصْبِرْ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ حَافِيًا يَّتَرَقَّبُ ۚ فَإِذَا الَّذِي اسْتَنْصَرَهُ بِالْأَمْسِ يَسْتَصْرِحُهُ ۚ قَالَ لَهُ مُوسَىٰ إِنَّكَ لَعَوِيٌّ مُّبِينٌ ۝ فَلَمَّا أَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يَبْطِشَ بِالَّذِي هُوَ

عَدُوَّهُمَا ۚ قَالَ يَأْتِيَنَّكَ مَا تَقْتُلِي ۖ كَمَا قَتَلْتَ نَفْسًا بِآلِهَتِي ۚ إِنَّ تَرِيدُ إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَ جَبَّارًا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا تُرِيدُ أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١١﴾ وَجَاءَ رَجُلٌ مِنَ أَقْصَا الْمَدِينَةِ يَسْعَىٰ ۚ قَالَ يُوسُفَىٰ إِنَّ الْمَلَائِكَةَ يُتْرَكُونَ بِكَ يُقْتُلُونَكَ فَأَخْرِجْ إِنِّي لَكَ مِنَ النَّصِيحِينَ ﴿١٢﴾ فَأَخْرَجَ مِنْهَا خَافِيًا يَتَرَقَّبُ ۚ قَالَ رَبِّ نَجِّنِي مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَلَمَّا تَوَجَّهَ تِلْقَاءَ مَدْيَنَ قَالَ عَلَىٰ رَئِي ۚ أَنْ يَهْدِيَنِي سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ ﴿١٤﴾ وَلَمَّا وَرَدَ مَاءَ مَدْيَنَ وَجَدَ عَلَيْهِ أُمَّةٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ يَسْقُونَ ۚ وَوَجَدَ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ امْرَأَتَيْنِ تَذُودَانِ ۚ قَالَ مَا خُبَّكُمَا قَالَتَا لَا نَسْقِي حَتَّىٰ يُصْدِرَ الرِّعَاءُ ۚ وَأَبُونَا شَيْخٌ كَبِيرٌ ﴿١٥﴾ فَسَقَىٰ لَهُمَا ثُمَّ تَوَلَّىٰ إِلَى الظِّلِّ فَقَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي لِمَا أَنزَلْتَ إِلَيَّ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَقِيرٌ ﴿١٦﴾ فَجَاءَتْهُ إِحْدَاهُمَا تَتَشَبَّهُ عَلَىٰ اسْتَحْيَاءٍ ۚ قَالَتْ إِنَّ أَبِي يَدْعُوكَ لِيَجْزِيَكَ أَجْرَ مَا سَقَيْتَ لَنَا ۚ فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُ وَقَصَّ عَلَيْهِ الْقَصَصَ قَالَ لَا تَخَفْ ۚ نَجَوْتَ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٧﴾ قَالَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا يَأْبَىٰ اسْتَأْجَرُهُ ۚ إِنَّ خَيْرَ مَنِ اسْتَأْجَرْتَ الْقَوِيُّ الْأَمِينُ ﴿١٨﴾ قَالَ إِنِّي أُرِيدُ أَنْ أُنكِحَكَ إِحْدَى ابْنَتَي هَاتَيْنِ عَلَىٰ أَنْ تَأْجُرَنِي ثَمَنِي ۚ حَبِيبٌ ۚ فَإِنْ أَثْمَمْتَ عَشْرًا فَمِنْ عِنْدِكَ ۚ وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَمْلِكَ سَتَجِدُنِي إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١٩﴾ قَالَ ذَلِكَ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكَ ۚ أَيُّهَا الْأَجْلَيْنِ فَصَبِّتْ فَلَا عُدْوَانَ عَلَيَّ ۚ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ مَا نَقُولُ وَكِيلٌ ﴿٢٠﴾ فَلَمَّا قَضَىٰ مُوسَى الْأَجَلَ وَسَارَ بِأَهْلِهِ آنَسَ مِنْ جَانِبِ الطُّورِ نَارًا ۚ قَالَ لِأَهْلِهِ امْكُثُوا إِنِّي آنَسْتُ نَارًا ۚ لَعَلِّي آتِيكُمْ مِنْهَا بِخَبَرٍ أَوْ جَذْوَةٍ مِنَ النَّارِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَصْطَلُونَ ﴿٢١﴾ فَلَمَّا أَتَاهَا نُودِيَ مِنْ شَاطِئِ الْوَادِ الْأَيْمَنِ فِي الْبُقْعَةِ الْمُبْرَكَةِ مِنَ الشَّجَرَةِ أَنْ يُّوسُفَىٰ إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢٢﴾ وَأَنْ أَلْقِ عَصَاكَ ۚ فَلَمَّا رَآهَا تَهْتَزُّ كَأَنَّهَا جَانٌّ وَلَّىٰ مُدَبِّرًا لَمْ يَعْقِبْ ۚ يُّوسُفَىٰ أَقْبِلْ وَلَا تَخَفْ ۚ إِنَّكَ مِنَ الْآمِنِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾ أَسْأَلُكَ بِكَ فِي جَنِّكَ تَخْرُجُ بَيْضَاءَ مِنْ غَيْرِ سَوَاءٍ ۚ وَأَضْمُ إِلَيْكَ جَنَّاكَ مِنَ الرَّهْبِ ۚ فَذَكَ بَرَاهَانٍ مِنْ رَبِّكَ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا فَاسِقِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي قَتَلْتُ مِنْهُمْ نَفْسًا فَأَخَافُ أَنْ يَقْتُلُونِ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَأَخِي هَارُونُ هُوَ أَفْضَلُ مِنِّي لِسَانًا فَأَرْسَلْهُ مَعِيَ رِدْءًا يُصَدِّقُنِي ۚ إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَنْ يُكَذِّبُونِ ﴿٢٦﴾ قَالَ سَنَشُدُّ عَضُدَكَ بِأَخِيكَ وَنَجْعَلُ لَكُمَا سُلْطٰنًا فَلَا يَصِلُونَ إِلَيْكُمَا ۚ بِأَيِّتِنَا أَنْتَبَاهُ وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ الْغُلَبُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾ فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ مُوسَىٰ بِآيَتِنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ قَالُوا مَا هَٰذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُفْتَرًى وَمَا سَمِعْنَا بِهَٰذَا فِي آبَائِنَا الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٢٨﴾ وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰ رَبِّي أَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ جَاءَ بِالْهُدَىٰ مِنْ عِنْدِهِ ۚ وَمَنْ تَكُونُ لَهُ عَاقِبَةُ الدَّارِ ۚ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾ وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ مَا عَلِمْتُ لَكُم مِّنَ اللَّهِ غَيْرِي ۚ فَأَوْقِدْ لِي يَهَامُ عَلَى الطَّيْنِ فَاجْعَلْ لِّي صَرْحًا ۚ لَعَلِّي أَطَّلِعُ إِلَى اللَّهِ مُوسَىٰ ۚ وَإِنِّي لَأَظُنُّهُ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴿٣٠﴾ وَاسْتَكَبَرُ هُوَ وَجُنُودُهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُم إِلَيْنَا لَا يُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٣١﴾ فَأَخَذْنَاهُ وَجُنُودَهُ فَنَبَذْنَاهُمْ فِي الْيَمِّ ۚ فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٣٢﴾ وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ آيَةً يُرْجَعُونَ إِلَى النَّارِ ۚ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ لَا يُنصَرُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَاتَّبَعْنَاهُمْ فِي هَٰذِهِ الدُّنْيَا لَعْنَةً ۚ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ هُمْ مِنَ الْمَقْبُوحِينَ ﴿٣٤﴾ وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا أَهْلَكْنَا الْقُرُونَ الْأُولَىٰ بَصَائِرَ لِلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً ۚ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَمَا كُنْتَ بِجَانِبِ الْعَرَبِ إِذْ قَضَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَى الْأَمْرَ وَمَا كُنْتَ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَلَكِنَّا أَنْشَأْنَا قُرُونًا فَتَطَاوَلَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْعُمُرُ ۚ وَمَا كُنْتَ ثَابِتًا فِي أَهْلِ مَدْيَنَ تَتْلُو عَلَيْهِم آيَاتِنَا ۚ وَلَكِنَّا كُنَّا مُرْسِلِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَمَا كُنْتَ بِجَانِبِ الطُّورِ إِذْ نَادَيْنَا وَلَكِنْ رَّحْمَةً مِّن رَّبِّكَ لِتُنذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّا أَتَاهُمْ مِنْ نَّذِيرٍ ۚ مِّن قَبْلِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾

This is Tā Sīn Mīm. These are the verses of the clear Book of God. We will narrate to you some part of the tale of Moses and the Pharaoh in all truth for the guidance of those who want to accept faith. (1-3)

Indeed, the Pharaoh had become a tyrant in the land of Egypt. And he had divided its inhabitants into different classes. He had oppressed one of their groups: he would slaughter their

sons and let their women live. Indeed, he was among those who create disorder in the land. And We wanted to show favour to those who had been oppressed in the land and to make them leaders and grant them inheritance and to bestow political authority upon them in the land and, through them, inflict the Pharaoh and Hāmān and their armies with what they feared. (4-6)

And We revealed to the mother of Moses: "Suckle him; so, when you have fear for him, consign him to the river and fear and grieve not. We will bring him back to you and will make him from among Our messengers." (7)

So, the Pharaoh's household picked him up so that he may become their enemy and a source of grief. Indeed, the Pharaoh and Hāmān and their armies committed a grave mistake. And the Pharaoh's wife said to him: "This is the comfort of your and my eyes. Do not kill him. It may well be that he gives us benefit or we even make him our son but little did they know of the fate. (8-9)

And the heart of Moses' mother became very anxious. She may well have revealed its secret if We had not taken hold of her heart so that she remain from among the believers. And she said to his sister: "Go after him." So, she kept any eye on him from afar and these people were not able to know of this. (10-11)

And We had already made him refuse the milk of wet nurses; so, she said: "Should I inform you of a household who will bring him up for your sake and will look after him with great care?" Thus We had him returned to his mother so that her eyes become soothed and she does not grieve and that she fully knows that God's promise is always fulfilled but most people are not aware of this. (12-13)

Thus when he reached his youth and became complete, We granted him the power of judgement and blessed him with knowledge and thus do We reward those who are thorough. (14)

And one day when he entered the city unheeded, he saw two people fighting. One of them belonged to his own faction and the other belonged to the faction of his enemies. So, the one who belonged to his faction requested him to help against the person who was from his opponents. Then Moses threw a punch at him and killed him. He said: "This is a satanic act done by me; indeed, he is an open enemy who leads astray." He prayed: "My Lord! I have been unjust to my soul; pardon me." So, God pardoned him. Indeed, He is most Forgiving and Merciful. He said: "Since you have shown your grace to me, I promise that I will never be among those who help wrongdoers." (15-17)

Thus, the next day he entered the city, scared and probing around. He then saw the same person who had sought help yesterday again asking him for help today. Moses said: "You are a very evident mischievous person." Thus, when he made up his mind to grasp the person who was the enemy of both, he cried out: "Moses! Do you want to kill me the way you killed a person yesterday. You want to become a tyrant in this land. You do not want to be among those who set right affairs." (18-19)

And a person came running from the far end of the city. He said: "Moses! The high-ups of the government are consulting to kill you; so, go away from here; I am from among your well-wishers." So, he went away from there scared and probing around and he prayed: "Lord! Deliver me from the nation of the oppressors." (20-21)

And when he turned towards Madyan, he prayed: "Hopefully my Lord will guide me to the straight path." And when he reached the well of Madyan, he saw a swarm of people who were providing water to their flocks and two women aside from them who were waiting with their goats. He asked them: "What is your issue?" They replied: "We do not let our goats drink untill

the shepherds take away their goats and our father is very old.” So, he made helped their goats drink for them; then withdrew to a shade and prayed: “Lord! I am in need of whatever good you send down to me at this time.” (22-24)

Thus one of them shyly came over. She said: “My father is calling you that he may reward you for providing water to our flock for us.” So, when he came and recounted before him all the story, he said: “Now fear not. You have been delivered from the oppressors.” (25)

One of them said: “Father! Keep this man in your service because a person who is strong and trustworthy is the best of those who can serve.” (26)

The old man said: “I want to wed one of my girls to you on the condition that you will serve me for eight years. If you take this term to ten years, then this will be your will. I do not impose any hardship on you. God willing, you will find me a decent person.” He replied: “This agreement is final between you and me. There shall be no compulsion on me regarding whichever of the two periods I complete. And God is a witness to the agreement we are making.” (27-28)

So, when Moses (sws) completed the term and departed with his family, he saw a flame towards the mount of Sinai. He said to his family: “Stay here that I may go and bring some news from there or bring an live ember so that you may warm yourselves.” (29)

So, when he came near it in the blessed place from the side of the valley of Ayman, he heard a voice from the tree: “Moses! I am God, Lord of the worlds. You throw down your staff.” Then when he saw it slithering as if it was a serpent, he turned and fled and did not look back. Moses! Come forward and fear not; you are absolutely secure. Put your hand in your armpit. It will come out white without any ailment and draw back your arm the way it is drawn back in fear. Thus, these are two signs from your Lord to go to the Pharaoh and his courtiers. Indeed, they are a very insolent people. (30-32)

He said: “Lord! I have killed one of them; so I fear that they will kill me. And my brother Aaron is more eloquent than me. Send him with me also as my helper, that he may support me. I fear that these people will reject me.” God said: “We will also strengthen your arm with your brother and bestow a special power on you both so that they are not able to harm you. So go with Our signs, both of you, and those who follow you will remain dominant.” (33-35)

Then, when Moses came to them with Our very clear signs, they said: “This is merely a magic fabricated and we have never heard of such things from our predecessors.” (36)

And Moses said: “My Lord knows full well the one who has come from Him with guidance and whose fate in the Hereafter is good. The unjust will never attain success.” (37)

And the Pharaoh said: “Courtiers! I am not aware of any god for you except myself. So, O Haman! Ignite bricks of clay for me and build for me a tall palace that I may peep on the God of Moses. I regard him to be liar.” (38)

And he and his armies showed arrogance without any reason and they thought that they will never have to return to Us. So, We seized him and his armies. Thus We flung them into the sea. Then see the fate the unjust met! And in this world We made them leaders who call towards Hell and on the Day of Judgement, they will not be helped and in this world We put a curse on them and on the Day of Judgement, they will be the ones ruined. (39-42)

And after destroying the earlier nations, We gave the Book to Moses as one that gives insights to people and as a guide and mercy that they may be reminded. (43)

And you were neither present on the western side of the mountain when We informed Moses of Our decision and nor were you among those people who were present there. But We raised up many nations; then a period of time passed over them [and they forgot Our reminder; so, We sent

you as a messenger to remind them] and you were also not stationed among the people of Madyan when We were reciting Our revelations, but We were to send you as a messenger [so We informed you of those events], and you were also not present aside Tūr when We called Moses, but you [were sent] by the grace of your Lord [that] you may warn a nation to which no warner came before you so that they be reminded. (44-46)

Explanation

طَسَمَ ﴿١﴾ تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ ﴿٢﴾¹

The isolated letters have been discussed earlier in this exegesis. The fact that the expression الْكِتَابِ has in it the elements of both favour and conclusive communication of the truth – especially for the People of the Book – has also been explained at an appropriate place. The previous *sūrah* also has a very similar introductory verse. This is very clear evidence that both have the same central theme.

تَتْلُوَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ نَّبِإِ مُوسَىٰ وَفِرْعَوْنَ بِالْحَقِّ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٢﴾²

Though the Prophet (sws) is addressed in this verse, yet the last words are proof of the fact that the purpose of narrating this account is to sound a warning to the leaders of the Quraysh – who were the Pharaohs of their times. The word بِالْحَقِّ means “in truth, the way it exactly is with an objective and a purpose to teach a lesson.” In the Torah, neither is the account of Moses and the Pharaoh (sws) correctly narrated, nor does it bring out the message and lesson which is its real spirit. The Qur'ān has recounted this tale while keeping in view both these aspects. The verb in لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ expresses intention. These last words of the verse harbour a warning in them: only those people will benefit from this account, narrated by God, who have the intention to profess faith; those who have become blind and deaf will remain so and they will not change.

سَمِيعُ أُنْبَاءِهِمْ وَيَسْمَعُ

The words **وَجَعَلَ أَهْلَهَا شِيَعًا يَسْتَضَعِفُ طَائِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ** explain the nature of the Pharaoh's tyranny and spreading anarchy in the land: he had divided the inhabitants of his country into categories and he had oppressed one of their factions by making them his slaves. When the ruler and the ruled both are slaves of God, then it is not permissible for a ruler to discriminate between his subjects. In fact, the law should be the same for both the ruler and ruled. Similarly, the norms of justice and equality should be the same for both. Yet the Pharaoh had made the Israelites his slaves and had become their god. At the same time, he had authorized the Copts, his own nation, to force the Israelites to work for them as slaves.

The words **يُرِيدُ أَن يَبْنِيَّاهُمْ وَيَسْتَضَعِفَ نِسَاءَهُمْ** express an example of the oppression and injustice which the Pharaoh and the Copts had subjected the Israelites to. The fear which induced the Pharaoh and his chiefs to take up the inhuman scheme of killing the male children of the Israelites has already been explained in Sūrah Tāhā and some other previous *sūrahs*.

The words **إِنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ** refer to the fact that the Pharaoh was among those who spread anarchy and disorder in God's earth whereas the Almighty has blessed all those with power and authority for the sole reason of establishing justice and peace in it.

وَنُرِيدُ أَنْ نَمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اسْتُضْعِفُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَنَجْعَلَهُمْ أَئِمَّةً وَنَجْعَلَهُمُ الْوَارِثِينَ⁴

There occurs a suppression of an incomplete verb before **نُرِيدُ** in accordance with the linguistic principles of Arabic. The implication is that the Pharaoh and his companions were bent upon oppressing the Israelites and wanted to ensure that the Israelites should not escape from this oppression. On the other hand, it was God's intent that He show favour to the oppressed, grant them religious leadership and after destroying the oppressors, give the oppressed the chance to rule. The words **نَجْعَلَهُمْ أَئِمَّةً** refer to the religious authority which the Israelites were bestowed after the advent of Moses (sws), while the words **نَجْعَلَهُمُ الْوَارِثِينَ** refer to the position of political authority that was given to them in the land of Palestine and whose boundaries became very vast in the times of Solomon (sws). So much so that Egypt became its annexe.

وَنُنَبِّئُكَ لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَزُرِيَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ وَجُنُودَهُمَا مِنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَحْذَرُونَ⁵

The expression **تُنَبِّئُكَ** means political authority and power. In other words, God intended that He grant these oppressed people a strong kingdom and show the Pharaoh and Hāmān that which they feared. The words **مَا كَانُوا يَحْذَرُونَ** refer to this fear of the Pharaoh and his chiefs. It has been explained at an appropriate place that they feared the ever increasing number of the Israelites. They contended that if these people were able to acquire force, they would seize the country or connive with exterior enemies to expel the Copts from the land. It is to circumvent this danger that these foolish people plotted the scheme that has been mentioned with all its details in the previous *sūrahs*. Yet before God's plans, all these schemes and preemptive measures could not succeed the slightest. His plans regarding the oppressed were materialised and their enemies in spite of their power and might and in spite of all their planning were routed. It should be kept in mind that it is to present this fact which is mentioned subsequently in this *sūrah*, that the whole

4. And We wanted to show favour to those who had been oppressed in the land and to make them leaders and grant them inheritance and to bestow political authority on them in the land

5. And through them inflict the Pharaoh and Hāmān and their armies with what they feared.

tale is being narrated to the Quraysh. The purpose is that they should not consider it an ancient tale but hear it while keeping in view the truth found in it.

Here, it is for the first time that Hāmān is also mentioned with the Pharaoh. The way he is mentioned, shows that he was a minister of the Pharaoh and that he had a special interest in oppressing the Israelites. Further ahead also, he is mentioned as the prime minister of the Pharaoh. The Torah does not mention this name, but this does not make any difference. There are so many facts which the Qur'ān has actually corrected in the Torah or made additions. This also is a valuable addition in the account of Moses (sws) and the Pharaoh. Some orientalists have objected to this name. They say that there was no one in Egypt by this name. I am afraid that this objection of these naïve people is totally foolish. Can they claim that they have found a comprehensive list of names of all the ministers and high officials of Egypt of that era? Are these people even united about the person of the Pharaoh who was a contemporary of Moses (sws), let alone that list of names? Such things that they say in frenzy of opposing the Qur'ān are not even worth giving attention to. These people are very adept in losing sight of a reality, but when they give information of something, it is very evident that they exaggerate greatly.

Here, there is a specific reason that, besides the Pharaoh and Hāmān, their armies are specially mentioned many times. A study of the history of that era shows that the Pharaoh and his chiefs viewed the issue of the Israelites in a political vein. They regarded their large number to be a threat to the government. For this reason, the Pharaoh had directed all his chiefs that they should ask their armies to remain fully alert to deal with any imminent danger from the Israelites. Thus, when he decided to chase the Israelites, he called all his chiefs together with their armies. The Pharaoh was very proud of his army, as is evident from the Qur'ān and the Torah. However, the Almighty destroyed his pride in the blink of an eye.

وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمِّ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَرْضِعِيهِ ۖ فَإِذَا اخْضَعَتْ عَلَيْهِ فَالْقِيهِ فِي الْيَمِّ وَلَا تَخَافِي وَلَا تَحْزَنِي ۚ إِنَّا رَأَوُوهُ الْيَمِّ وَجَاعِلُوهُ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٦﴾

From here begins the real account. When Moses (sws) was born, the Almighty sent a revelation to his mother to continue to suckle him, and if she had any fear, she should put him in a river, but fear and grieve not the slightest: God will return him to her and make him one of his messengers.

Revelation here obviously does not refer to the formal revelation which is specific to the messengers of God. It means to implant a thought through an inspiration or a dream in such a manner that the heart is reassured.

In the period when Moses (sws) was born, the scheme of killing the male child was fully in force. Initially, the Pharaoh and his chiefs wanted to use midwives for this purpose but it is evident from the Torah that they did not cooperate much. Finally, the Pharaoh gave the Copts a general directive to throw every male child born to the Israelites into a river. It was in this dangerous period that Moses (sws) was born. Hence, his mother was constantly worried about the safety of her child from the wolves around her. While referring to this danger, the Almighty asked her to suckle him and if she felt any such danger, she should consign the child to the river without any fear or hesitation and not worry or grieve. The Almighty will have him returned to her and in future make him one of His messengers. It is obvious that this directive of the Almighty to consign Moses (sws) to the river was because the Almighty wanted that the very way which the

6. And We revealed to the mother of Moses: "Suckle him; so, when you have fear about him, consign him to the river and fear and grieve not. We will bring him back to you and will make him from among Our messengers."

Pharaoh had adopted for killing boys should become a means of deliverance for Moses (sws). It is evident from verse 49 of Sūrah Ṭāhā that God directed her to place Moses (sws) in a box and then consign the box to the river. In the Torah, this incident is related thus:

And she became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a fine child, she hid him for three months. But when she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. (Exodus, 2:2-3)

The mistakes in the above narration of this incident in the Torah have been explained in the exegesis of Sūrah al-A'raf and Sūrah Ṭāhā. Here, what is worthy of special attention is that the mother of Moses (sws) was assured through divine inspiration that the Almighty will return the boy to her and make Him His messenger, and this style of assurance shows that it was given in the form of a promise. It was by trusting this assurance that his mother mustered the courage to undertake this measure, otherwise, how can a mother consign her beloved child to the waves of a river?

فَالْتَقَطَهُ آلُ فِرْعَوْنَ لِيَكُونَ لَهُمْ عَدُوًّا وَحَزَنًا إِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ وَجُنُودَهُمَا كَانُوا خَاطِئِينَ ﴿٧﴾

In accordance with strong contextual indication, this much is suppressed before this verse that when his mother felt danger lurking nearby, she placed him in a box made of papyrus and placed the box in the Nile. If the account of the Torah is relied upon, the picture of the incident that emerges is that, for three months, she hid Moses (sws) by adopting various measures, but ultimately realised that she would not be able to succeed. Thus, she was compelled to do what is mentioned in the above cited verses of the Torah. The river Nile, passing through various settlements of the Israelites, flowed towards the palace of the Pharaoh. There the waves spilled the box on the bank. It caught sight of the family members of the Pharaoh. When they saw an angelic child in it, it was ordered by the king and queen that it be brought to the royal palace. The Pharaoh's wife, who was very kind, as is evident from Sūrah al-Tahrīm, opined that the boy should not be killed for he may be of benefit to them or they may adopt him as their son. In this way, Moses (sws) reached the royal palace and became the beloved of the king and the queen. Here, it is evident from the word آل that when the news of a boy placed in a box reached the royal palace, all young and old members of the royal family reached the place and all of them carried him back to the palace.

The ل in لِيَكُونَ لَهُمْ عَدُوًّا وَحَزَنًا is for expressing the consequence and fate. They had picked up the child so that it could become a means of comfort for them, as will become evident from words of the queen ahead. However, they did not know what was concealed by fate for them in this measure: it would be through the hands of this child that the supremacy and power of the Pharaoh will be routed forever.

The words إِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ وَجُنُودَهُمَا كَانُوا خَاطِئِينَ are a general comment on the attitude of the Pharaoh, Hāmān and their armies. Because of their foolishness they thought that all power and authority was in their hands and they would continue to oppress the Israelites in this way. Little did they know that God wanted that their greatest enemy be raised in their royal palace through the king

7. So the Pharaoh's household picked him up that he may become their enemy and a source of grief. Indeed, the Pharaoh and Hāmān and their armies committed a grave mistake.

and the queen. Readers may look up verse 6 above.

وَقَالَتِ امْرَأَتُ فِرْعَوْنَ قُرْتُتُ عَيْنِي لِي وَلَكَ لَا تَقْتُلْهُ ۖ عَسَىٰ أَن يَنْفَعَنَا أَوْ نَتَّخِذَهُ وَلَدًا وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٨﴾

When the queen saw the child, she was bewitched by his angelic face. She told the Pharaoh that this child is the comfort of their eyes and that he should not slay him and that he will hopefully be of benefit to them or they may even adopt him as their son. At another place, I have explained about the queen that she was a very kind-hearted lady who was sick of the Pharaoh's attitude.

The words *عَسَىٰ أَن يَنْفَعَنَا أَوْ نَتَّخِذَهُ وَلَدًا* are exactly the same as what the king of Egypt had said about Joseph while addressing his wife. It seems that till that time, the queen was childless and if the statement of the Torah is accepted that the first person to see Moses (sws) was the Pharaoh's daughter, then it will have to be conceded that till that time they did not have a male child. For this reason, they surmised that in the first place such a beautiful child would bring blessings and in the second if they did not have a male child in future, they would adopt him as their son.

The words *وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ* express the fact that this is what the king and the queen were thinking. However, they did not know what lay in store for them.

وَأَصْبَحَ فُؤَادُ أُمِّ مُوسَىٰ فَرَجًا ۖ إِن كَادَتْ لَتُبْدِي بِهِ لَوْلَا أَن رَّبَّنَا عَلَىٰ قَلْبِهَا لَتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنَكِّرِينَ ﴿٩﴾

Moses' mother mustered the courage to consign him to the river when she saw that there was no other way out. However, this verse mentions what happened afterwards: her heart became totally bereft of patience. It became likely that she may say or insinuate something that would reveal this secret; however, the Almighty got hold of her, so that she remain steadfast on the faith she was blessed with, even in times of trial. A human being is after all a human being. It is not easy at all to consign one's beloved son to the waves. Though she had been divinely guided in this regard and, in the absence of this, she could not even have imagined it – yet if those who merely imagine this incident get the jitters – who except God could know what was going on in her heart. The Almighty blessed her with special help at this precarious juncture and who except Him could have done so. If God tries and tests His people, then these trials are His established practice and such trials can be tough with respect to the status a person has; however, at the same time, it is His established practice that He takes care of those who fight out these trials. Since Moses' mother had borne witness to her faith and trust in God by consigning her child to the river, the Almighty assured her specially and strengthened her heart in the next phase to honour her trust in Him and ensured that nothing to the contrary happens. This is what God does with believing men and women but few understand this.

وَقَالَتْ لِأُخْتِهِ قُصِّيهِ ۖ فَبَصَّرَتْ بِهِ عَنْ جُنْبٍ ۖ وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

When the box floated forward in the river, she asked her daughter to follow it and see where it went. This was the last measure she could have done to reassure herself. Obviously, the box could

8. And the Pharaoh's wife said to him: "This is the comfort of your and my eyes. Do not kill him. It may well be that he gives us benefit or we even make him our son but little did they know of the fate.

9. And the heart of Moses' mother became very anxious. She may well have revealed its secret if We had not taken hold of her heart so that she remain from among the believers.

10. And she said to his sister: "Go after him." So, she kept any eye on him from afar and these people were not able to know of this.

have been followed till a certain distance; it was bound to sail away from the eyes; however, how could she think of being deprived of seeing it as long as this was possible. Thus, his sister observed the box from a distance so that no one became aware of what was going on. By God's grace, this scheme was successful. She was able to see the box reaching the bank near the Pharaoh's palace and also how the infant brother was taken out from the box and carried inside. It is evident from this that the royal palace was not very far from the settlements of the Israelites.

11 ﴿وَحَرَمْنَا عَلَيْهِ الْبَرَّاضِعَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَقَالَتْ هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ أَهْلِ بَيْتٍ يَكْفُلُونَهُ لَكُمْ وَهُمْ لَهُ نَصْحُونَ﴾

Now the scheme which the Almighty adopted to have Moses (sws) returned to his mother is mentioned. It is referred to above that the child was transported with great affection to the palace. Obviously; the first issue that needed to be solved was that who should suckle the child. One after the other, various wet-nurses were called, but Moses (sws) refused to drink their milk. Moses' sister took advantage of this situation. She stepped forward and sought permission to lead them to a household who would very tenderly care for the child. The people at the royal palace immediately agreed as they were very worried. In this way, it became possible for Moses (sws) to return to his mother.

12 ﴿فَرَدَدْنَاهُ إِلَىٰ أُمِّهِ كَيْ تَقَرَّ عَيْنُهَا وَلَا تَحْزَنَ ۚ وَلَنَعْلَمَ أَنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ﴾

Through this scheme, the Almighty had Moses (sws) extracted from the river and then transported back to his mother's lap so that she was comforted and was relieved of her sorrow.

The words ﴿وَلَنَعْلَمَ أَنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ﴾ point to the fulfillment of the promise mentioned earlier in verse 7. It was stated there that she should consign the child to the river without any sort of fear; God will protect him and then make him meet her. This verse states that, in this manner, the Almighty showed that He keeps His promise however difficult it may seem apparently and that His scheme never fails. The sentence ﴿لَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ﴾ highlights the real point of note: most people because of their naivety do not understand this fact. They regard God's promises to be bluff and they see loss and danger in trusting them. They want to observe the fulfillment of God's promises and then believe in them. The fact is that this is the real trial of people in this world that they should live and die for the promises and threats of God that are as yet to be fulfilled.

13 ﴿وَلَبَّابَدَغٍ أَشَدَّ ۖ وَأَسْتَوَىٰ ۖ أَتَيْنَهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا ۚ وَكَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ﴾

The expression ﴿بَدَغٍ أَشَدَّ﴾ means reaching adolescence and with it the word ﴿أَسْتَوَىٰ﴾ adds the meaning of "balance and stability in intellect and temperament" to it. In other words, the implication is that Moses (sws) reached a youthful age such that he had a stable and balanced personality. It may be noted that the age of youthfulness in itself is not of that significance, if it does not have the beauty of poise in sense and temperament.

11. And We had already made him refuse the milk of wet nurses; so, she said: "Should I inform you of a household who will bring him up for your sake and will look after him with great concern?"

12. Thus We had him returned to his mother so that her eyes are soothed and she does not grieve and that she fully knows that God's promise is always fulfilled but most people are not aware of this.

13. Thus when he reached his youth and became complete, We granted him the power of judgement and blessed him with knowledge and thus do We reward those who are thorough.

The word **حُكْم** means the power to take decisions and **عِلْم** means the comprehension of God. Both have various stages and levels. Their highest level is the one bestowed on the prophets of God. Thus, exactly the same words have been mentioned in the Qur'ān for the knowledge of the prophets; however, obviously, here they do not refer to that knowledge and wisdom because the incidents of the early life of Moses (sws) are being related. He was assigned prophet hood much later, as is subsequently mentioned.

The verse states that when Moses (sws) reached the age of youth and his intellect and temperament stabilized, God granted him knowledge and wisdom. The last part of the verse **وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ** states that this is how God rewards those who are thorough in their deeds. The word **مُحْسِنِينَ** refers to people who use their abilities in the right way at the optimum level. It is stated that to such people God grants a share of knowledge and wisdom. It is this knowledge and wisdom which depicts the perfection and splendour of a person's skills and abilities. If a person is not able to acquire these, he will end up ruining all his abilities as well as his youth.

وَدَخَلَ الْمَدِينَةَ عَلَى حِينٍ غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ أَهْلِهَا فَوَجَدَ فِيهَا رَجُلَيْنِ يَقْتَتِلَانِ هَٰذَا مِنْ شِيعَتِهِ وَهَٰذَا مِنْ عَدُوِّهِ فَاسْتَعَاثَ الَّذِي مِّنْ شِيعَتِهِ عَلَى الَّذِي مِّنْ عَدُوِّهِ فَوَكَرَهُ مُوسَى فَقَطَّعَ عَلَيْهِ قَالَ هَٰذَا مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ عَدُوٌّ مُّضِلٌّ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٤﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي فَاغْفِرْ لِي فَغَفَرَ لِي إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٥﴾

The word **مَدِينَةً** refers to the actual city which was the centre and capital of the nobility. Since the status of the Israelites was that of slaves and servicemen, their settlement was located separately from the real city. They would go to the city only to provide service and labour.

When Moses (sws) entered his youth, the traits of honour, bravery and civility which are a reflection of piety and knowledge appeared in him in young age. He would go to the city periodically to see the plight of his oppressed brethren. It seems that because of his sense of honour, he was regarded with fear by the Copts. Hence, he would visit the city in secret when people would be resting. One day, he entered the city for this purpose and saw that a Copt and an Israelite were fighting. When the latter saw him, he asked for his help. The sense of honour in Moses (sws) induced him to come forward and help his oppressed brother and he tried to separate the two. However, it is evident that the Copt, because of his arrogance, came after Moses (sws). While defending himself, Moses (sws) punched him and such was the strength of the punch that the Copt died on the spot. Moses (sws) never had the intention to kill the Copt, nor did he ever envisage this situation. When this accident took place without any intention whatsoever, he regretted his folly and sought forgiveness from his Lord: "Lord! I have been very unjust to myself; so forgive me" Since this mistake was not deliberate and then he immediately repented for it as well, he was forgiven by God straight away and he was also divinely conveyed this forgiveness by the words that God is **الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ** (most forgiving ever-merciful).

It is mentioned earlier that God blessed Moses (sws) with wisdom and knowledge together with

14. And one day when he entered the city unheeded, he saw two people fighting. One of them belonged to his own faction and the other belonged to the faction of his enemies. So, the one who belonged to his faction requested him to help against the person who was from his opponents. Then Moses threw a punch at him and killed him. He said: "This is a satanic act done by me; indeed, he is an open enemy who leads astray." He prayed: "O My Lord! I have been unjust to my soul; pardon me." So, God pardoned him. Indeed, He is most Forgiving and Merciful.

the full bloom of youth. This repentance was a consequence of his wisdom. If he had merely been a strong young lad, he would have been extremely proud of this feat. In particular, he would have regarded the killing a Copt to be an eternal achievement. But even in the case of an enemy, he regarded his unintentional mistake to be a crime and instantly asked God for forgiveness. It should be kept in mind that this matter was between himself and his God. There was no possibility of any justice that Moses (sws) could expect from the government, keeping in view the circumstances that existed in Egypt at that time.

15 **قَالَ رَبِّ بِمَا أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ فَلَنْ أَكُونَ ظَهِيرًا لِلْمُجْرِمِينَ** ﴿١٥﴾

Favours increase the gratitude of the righteous for the Almighty. So, when Moses (sws) was shown favour by God who forgave him, he promised to himself that he will never help criminals in future. These words of his do not necessitate that he helped the Israelite considering him to be a criminal. The fact is that what he did was because he regarded the Israelite to be innocent and did it at the latter's pleading. Also, keeping in view the circumstances of those times, he believed that the Copt must be the oppressor and the Israelite the oppressed. The Almighty, while forgiving Moses (sws), did not say that he was innocent and that the Copt was the oppressor. In fact, He forgave Moses (sws) after regarding him to have committed a mistake. From this Moses (sws) concluded that though he wanted to help the oppressed, he ended up helping the oppressor because he did not properly investigate the matter. Hence, for the future, he promised himself that he will not help anyone without investigating facts and that he will help only that person whose innocence is known. Thus, the very next day, when he saw the same Israelite fighting with another Copt, and, as before, he called him to help, Moses (sws) scolded him by saying that he seemed to be a mischievous person.

16 **فَأَصْبَحَ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ خَائِفًا يَتَرَقَّبُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي اسْتَنْصَرَهُ بِالْأَمْسِ يَسْتَصْرِحُهُ قَالَ لَهُ مُوسَى إِنَّكَ لَعَرُوفٌ مُبِينٌ** ﴿١٦﴾

The next day Moses (sws) entered the city while fearing the surroundings and looking around secretly. In his normal routine too, he was very cautious while going to the city, as is mentioned earlier. However, after this incident, he must have become even more worried about the reaction and general response that he and his nation may have to face as a result. Meanwhile, he saw the same Israelite asking for help once again. This time, Moses (sws) scolded him, telling him that he seemed to be clearly a mischievous person. The fact that he was a mischievous person was evident from what had happened the previous day, when he been also involved in a brawl with another person. This was clear testimony to his mischievous nature. Another reason for Moses (sws) deducing that the Israelite was a prankster was the words of forgiveness of the Almighty, that he was at fault in thinking that the Israelite was at fault and he had not properly investigated the matter. Thus, he fulfilled what he had promised the Almighty the previous day: he would not help any wrongdoer. So, this time, he did not immediately step forward for the help of the Israelite. But, assessing the situation, he warned him that he was a belligerent and mischievous person.

15. He said: "Since you have shown you grace to me, I promise that I will never be among those who help wrongdoers."

16. Thus, the next day he entered the city scared and probing around. He then saw the same person who had sought help yesterday again asking him for help today. Moses said: "You are a very evident mischievous person."

فَلَمَّا أَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يَبْطِشَ بِالَّذِي هُوَ عَدُوٌّ لَّهُمَا¹⁷ قَالَ يُوْسَىٰ أَتُرِيدُ أَنْ تَقْتُلَنِي كَمَا قَتَلْتَ نَفْسًا بِالْأَمْسِ¹⁸ إِنْ تُرِيدُ إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَ جَبَّارًا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا تُرِيدُ أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُصْلِحِينَ¹⁷

Before the word أَنْ, an appropriate verb is suppressed, viz “when this happened” or “when the matter reached this extent”. It is evident from these words that, initially Moses (sws) tried to verbally reconcile the two; however, when this did not work he tried to disentangle the Copt who is called by the words عَدُوٌّ لَّهُمَا here i.e. the enemy of both Moses (sws) and the Israelites. The reason for this is evident: he was an obvious enemy of the Israelite while his enmity with Moses (sws) was due to nationalistic reasons as well as because he had become a thorn in the eyes of the Copts due to his reformatory measures.

Moses (sws) tried to get hold of the Copt, but he first scolded the Israelite because of which the latter thought that this time he would receive his punch. In this situation, he shouted that it was his turn of being punched to death the way Moses (sws) had killed a person yesterday. In this way, he exposed the secret because of his foolishness. Some people think that the words ... يُوْسَىٰ إِنْ تُرِيدُ إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَ جَبَّارًا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا تُرِيدُ أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُصْلِحِينَ were uttered by the Copt. However, this is not tenable because firstly the incident was still a secret and secondly the Copts never regarded Moses (sws) to be a reformer.

Consider next the part: إِنْ تُرِيدُ إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَ جَبَّارًا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا تُرِيدُ أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُصْلِحِينَ The word جَبَّار here means “one who is dictatorial,” “one who is out of control.” So, not only did the Israelite expose the secret, he even criticised Moses (sws) by saying that people thought that he wanted to redress and reform the situation; yet it seemed that this was not the case and that he wanted to be a despotic and tyrannical person. This statement, on the one hand, depicts the character of mean people: when a person helps them, they regard him to be a reformer; but if he tries to stop them from an evil, they not only regard him to be a highly repressive person, but also become spies against him and begin exposing his secrets. On the other hand, the character of Moses (sws) too becomes evident, that he was regarded by his nation to be a ray of hope to reform and set right affairs.

وَجَاءَ رَجُلٌ مِّنْ أَقْصَا الْمَدِينَةِ يَسْعَىٰ قَالَ يُوْسَىٰ إِنَّ الْمَلَائِكَةَ يُتْرَوْنَ بِكَ يُبْقِطُونَكَ فَاحْذَرِ إِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُضِلِّينَ¹⁸

As is indicated before, Moses (sws) was already being regarded with dread and suspicion by Pharaoh's people; however, when this incident took place and its secret became known too, from the tongue of an Israelite, it was but natural that the Pharaoh's people would have fumed with anger against him and would have started to plan to eliminate him.

The city which was the centre of the Pharaoh's chiefs and courtiers was away from the settlement of the Israelites, as has been referred to earlier. That is why it is alluded to by the expression أَقْصَا الْمَدِينَةِ. The verse states that from the farthest end of the city a person came running to Moses (sws) to inform him that they were planning to kill him. He seemed to have gathered this information. He introduced himself as a well-wisher of Moses (sws) and advised him to immediately leave the place. No details are mentioned here about that person; but in Sūrah al-

17. Thus, when he made up his mind to grasp the person who was the enemy of both, he cried out: “Moses! Do you want to kill me the way you killed a person yesterday. You want to become a tyrant in this land. You do not want to be among those who set right affairs.”

18. And a person came running from the far end of the city. He said: “Moses! The high-ups of the government are consulting to kill you; so, go away from here; I am from among your well-wishers.”

Mu'min a true believer from the clan of the Pharaoh is mentioned in detail. He belonged to the royal family. He was a well-wisher of Moses (sws) from the very start and in the later stages also, as shall be seen in Sūrah al-Mu'min, he strongly defended Moses (sws) before the Pharaoh and his courtiers. For this reason, in all probability, it seems that this was the same person.

The words **إِنَّكَ مِنَ النّٰصِحِينَ** were uttered by that person, because, in the atmosphere of distrust that existed between the Israelites and the Copts, Moses (sws) could likely have thought that a Copt was trying to over-awe him in this way. It is evident from the word **يَسْتَعِي** that, as soon as that person thought that the matter had become serious, in fact, dangerous, in spite of being among the courtiers, he came running to Moses (sws) at his settlement. This effort undertaken by him is a shining example of this sympathy and concern.

فَخَرَجَ مِنْهَا خَائِفًا يَتَرَقَّبُ ۚ قَالَ رَبِّ نَجِّنِي مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٩﴾

After this, Moses (sws), in a state of dread, moved out of Egypt cautiously and since there was a chance that the Pharaoh's forces would pursue him, he supplicated to God by the above words "Lord! Protect me from the evil of these wrongdoers."

وَلَمَّا وَرَدَ مَاءَ مَدْيَنَ وَجَدَ عَلَيْهِ أُمَّةٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ يَسْقُونَ ۖ وَوَجَدَ مِنْ دُونِهِمُ امْرَأَتَيْنِ تَذُودَانِ ۚ قَالَ مَا خَطْبُكُمَا قَالَتَا لَا نَسْقِي حَتَّىٰ يُصْدِرَ الرِّعَاءُ ۖ وَأَبُونَا شَيْخٌ كَبِيرٌ ﴿٢١﴾

It is evident from the style of the verse that at the time of his departure from Egypt, he had not ascertained his destination. It was later that he decided that he had to go to Madyan, and about Madyan too, he was not clear where to go and to whom to go. Without any such prior decision, he just turned in the direction of Madyan, hoping that the Almighty, Who is the guardian of His creatures, will guide him to the right place and make him reach such a place. It may be kept in mind that this journey of Moses (sws) was not of the nature of migration that actually took place after he was assigned the responsibility of prophet hood. The established practice of God about this type of migration is that He Himself determines its time and also explains all its phases Himself to His prophet. However, in this particular journey Moses (sws) did not have any such guidance. He just embarked upon it while reposing full confidence in God and it was this trust that actually guided him. Viewed thus, this incident carries a great message for all men and women created by God who face trials for the cause of truth. If they take a step while trusting God, they will be guided by Him, even though they do not have any clear glad tidings from God in this regard.

وَلَمَّا وَرَدَ مَاءَ مَدْيَنَ وَجَدَ عَلَيْهِ أُمَّةٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ يَسْقُونَ ۖ وَوَجَدَ مِنْ دُونِهِمُ امْرَأَتَيْنِ تَذُودَانِ ۚ قَالَ مَا خَطْبُكُمَا قَالَتَا لَا نَسْقِي حَتَّىٰ يُصْدِرَ الرِّعَاءُ ۖ وَأَبُونَا شَيْخٌ كَبِيرٌ ﴿٢١﴾

The word **مَاءَ** may refer to water and also to a well. The Torah mentions a well. Mountain springs

19. So, he went away from there scared and probing around and he prayed: "Lord! Deliver me from the nation of the oppressive."

20. And when he turned towards Madyan, he prayed: "Hopefully my Lord will guide me to the straight path."

21. And when he reached the well of Madyan, he saw a swarm of people who were providing water to their flocks and two women aside from them who were waiting with their goats. He asked them: "What is your issue?" They replied: "We do not make our goats drink unless the shepherds take away their goats and our father is very old."

are also no different from wells. In general, the routes that reach them are very narrow. Hence, benefitting from their water for drinking is not easy, especially when they are crowded as well.

When Moses (sws) reached Madyan, he sat at one of its wells or fountains. There he saw a bunch of shepherds watering their flocks and also two women who were waiting for their turn. It is evident from the word تَدُونُ that their herd had reached the fountain and was pushing forward to drink water from it, but the two women were being forced to pull them back. Moses (sws) asked them about the problem they were facing and why were they standing behind with their herd. They replied that their father had grown very old and as a result, they had to attend to their herd and that it was not possible for them to force their way into the crowd. They had, therefore, decided to wait for the other shepherds to leave and unless the latter left with their herds, it was not possible for them to provide water to their flock.

فَسَقَىٰ لَهُمَا ثُمَّ تَوَلَّىٰ إِلَى الظِّلِّ فَقَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي بِمَا أَنْزَلْتَ إِلَيَّ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَقِيرٌ ﴿٢٢﴾

After listening to the tale of these upright ladies, Moses (sws) was spurred to come to their rescue. He got up and took their flocks to drink water and, once he had done this job, he turned back and sat in the same shadow he was sitting beneath earlier. He then prayed to God: “God, whatever you send down to me at this time, I am in need of it.”

Here some points are especially worthy of note.

Firstly, Moses (sws) regarded with great significance that two upright ladies had to go through the fatigue of making their flock drink water and they were standing helplessly before the fountain, while holding back their flock. This sentiment of Moses (sws) is evident from his question: مَا خَطْبُكُمَا. In Arabic, the word خَطْبُ is used for some important matter. Hence, concealed in his question, was the implied meaning of asking about the problems and circumstances they were facing, since they had to attend to a rather arduous task and, as a result, were standing withholding their flocks. The ladies replied to him after fully comprehending the question that they had to do this because their father had grown quite old and they were holding back their herd because they were not able to push into the male crowd. It is evident from this depiction that in those circumstances also, the spheres of work of men and women were regarded as different. If women were compelled to take up a task belonging to the men's sphere, they would do so, but only because of compulsion. And that too not by working along side men and within them, but with full caution and decency by remaining as far apart as possible from the male company. Observe, on the one hand, this societal norm that existed in the times of Shu'ayb, which is evident from this incident and on the other, observe what our reformers of this era say that the sphere of work for both men and women is exactly the same and hence both should work hand in hand in every field. The arguments offered by these people are from the poor women of villages and the results are drawn from them for the women of the cities.

The second thing that needs to be noted in this incident is that Moses (sws) fulfilled his obligation to help the weak with full diligence as it was a requirement decency and courtesy. However, after that he did not even utter a single word expressing his own worry or need, or the pangs of his travels. On the contrary, he returned to the shade of the tree from where he had got up earlier to help them. Here, he prayed to God that he had come to this place as his destination and it has now

22. So, he made their goats drink for them, then withdrew to a shade and prayed: “Lord! I am in need of whatever good you send down to me at this time.”

arrived. He asked him that he was now waiting for His grace and mercy and that he was in need of whatever good He will send to him at that moment. Words are at loss to express the eloquence of this prayer. Only people of taste can understand it. Since the prayer was made at the right time, with the right sentiments and in the right words, its consequence manifested itself forthwith. The two women mentioned this good deed of Moses (sws) to their father and in this way the door was opened for Moses (sws) to acquire the good he had prayed for.

فَجَاءَتْهُ إِحْدَاهُمَا تَتَشَبَّى عَلَى اسْتِخْيَاءٍ ۖ قَالَتْ إِنَّ أَبِي يَدْعُوكَ لِيَجْزِيَكَ أَجْرَ مَا سَقَيْتَ لَنَا فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُ وَقَصَّ عَلَيْهِ الْقَصَصَ قَالَ لَا تَخَفْ ۖ نَجَوْتَ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾

While Moses (sws) was still sitting in the shade of the tree, one of them returned walking bashfully and modestly and told him that their father was calling him to compensate him for his effort in taking their herd to drink. It is evident from the Old Testament that, since on that day the two returned before their usual time, Shu'ayb (sws) asked them for the reason of their early return. They replied that on that day an Egyptian had done a good turn to them and taken their herd to drink. Shu'ayb (sws) asked them why they had left him alone and that they show go and fetch him so that he may have food with them. While complying with the directive of the father, one of the daughters came over to Moses (sws) and informed him that her father was calling him so that he may reward him for his service. At that time, Moses (sws) was in great need of such help. He considered it to be divine help and at once started to make his way to Shu'ayb (sws).

Here the words تَتَشَبَّى عَلَى اسْتِخْيَاءٍ need to be specially noted. The words مِنْ دُونِهِمْ in an earlier verse show that these two were standing on one side, away from the rest of shepherds. It has also been mentioned earlier that they had stated their reason for standing back: it was because of the crowd of the male shepherds that they have to wait until these shepherds were done. It is then stated that when she came to call Moses (sws), she was shy. It was not that she came boldly before him. On the contrary, she came before him in a reserved way while covering herself properly. The question arises that why has the Qur'ān narrated the minute details of this event in such a detailed manner. What else could be the answer to this question except that the Qur'ān wants to highlight, at every step, the mannerisms and ways of decency and how civilized women should behave before men. It is these norms of decency that the Qur'ān has described in the form of some regulations in Sūrah al-Nūr and Sūrah al-Aḥzāb. I have explained these regulations in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Nūr and, God willing, they will be further explained in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Aḥzāb. It may be kept in mind that the mannerisms described here are of women who had to shepherd their herd. So, when for them such is the desirable way, one can imagine what is desirable for those who are not faced with any such compelling circumstances.

The words فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُ وَقَصَّ عَلَيْهِ الْقَصَصَ قَالَ لَا تَخَفْ ۖ نَجَوْتَ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ refer to the fact that at the request of Shu'ayb, Moses (sws) came over to him and narrated before him his tale. After listening to him, Shu'ayb asked him not to worry: God had delivered him from unjust people. It was as if Moses (sws) got glad tidings of the acceptance of his invocation that he had made when he was departing from Egypt by the words: رَبِّ نَجِّنِي مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ as cited earlier in verse 21 of this sūrah.

23. Thus one of them shyly came over. She said: "My father is calling you that he may reward you for providing water to our flock for us." So, when he came and recounted before him all the story, he said: "Now fear not. You have been delivered from the oppressive."

قَالَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا يَا أَبَتِ اسْتَأْجِرْهُ إِنَّ خَيْرَ مَنِ اسْتَأْجَرْتَ الْقَوِيُّ الْأَمِينُ ﴿٢٤﴾

A repetition of the word إِحْدَاهُمَا shows that the recommendation stated in this verse was made by the other daughter of Shu'ayb (sws). If this recommendation had been made by the same daughter who had gone to call Moses (sws), then there was no need to repeat the word إِحْدَاهُمَا in this verse.

Shu'ayb (sws) was, in fact, in need of a helping hand for his herd, and it is evident from concomitant indications that he was looking for an appropriate person. For this reason, his daughter recommended Moses (sws) for this purpose. The best helper is he who is strong and trustworthy. Moses (sws) had both these qualities. As far as physical strength is concerned, it can be judged through the eyes. However, trustworthiness and honesty can only truly be known through experience. In normal circumstances, this experience takes a lot of time. Yet, in some circumstances, it takes place at the first encounter. A person's forehead and eyes bear witness to his character. One of Shu'ayb's (sws) daughters had first-hand experience of the decency, honour and purity of Moses (sws). Then the tale of chivalry Moses (sws) recounted before Shu'ayb (sws) must have made it evident to him that if such a determined and strong person did not have trustworthiness and honesty, then who else would have these traits.

قَالَ إِنِّي أُرِيدُ أَنْ أُنكِحَكَ إِحْدَى ابْنَتَيَّ هَاتَيْنِ عَلَى أَنْ تَأْجُرَنِي ثَمَنِي حَبِيبٌ ۚ فَإِنْ أَتَيْتَ عَشْرًا فَمِنْ عِنْدِكَ ۚ وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَشُقَّ عَلَيْكَ ۚ سَتَجِدُنِي إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾

Shu'ayb (sws) proposed to Moses (sws) for one of his daughter's hand with the condition that he work for him for eight years and, if Moses (sws) so desired, he could increase this period to ten years; there would be no pressure on him in this regard. He further told Moses (sws) that the latter would find him to be an upright person. It is evident from concomitant factors that Shu'ayb (sws) must have made this proposal at the behest of a divine indication and his words وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَشُقَّ عَلَيْكَ were actually meant to grant time to Moses (sws) to fully reflect and make a decision and not take a decision under any compulsion.

Here, no discussion needs to be done on the issue of *mahr*. It relates to the will of the wife. If the father wishes to have her married on a permissible condition and the wife also agrees to it, then there is nothing in the *sharī'ah* that hinders it.

قَالَ ذَلِكَ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكَ أَيُّهَا أَجْلَيْنِ قَضَيْتُ فَلَا عُدْوَانَ عَلَيَّ ۖ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ مَا نَقُولُ وَكِيلٌ ﴿٢٦﴾

Moses (sws) accepted both the proposal and the condition. He replied that whichever of these two periods he was able to fulfill should be left to his discretion. The word نَقُولُ connotes promise and pledge. The last part of the verse would thus mean: "We make God a witness to the agreement We are now making."

24. One of them said: "Father! Keep this man in your service because a person who is strong and trustworthy is the best of those who can serve.

25. The old man said: "I want to wed one of my girls to you on the condition that you will serve me for eight years. If you take this term to ten years, then this will be your will. I do not impose any hardship on you. God willing, you will find me a decent person."

26. He replied: "This agreement is concluded between you and me. There shall be no compulsion on me regarding whichever of the two periods I complete. And God is a witness to the agreement we are making."

فَلَمَّا قَضَىٰ مُوسَى الْأَجَلَ وَسَارَ بِأَهْلِهِ آنَسَ مِنْ جَانِبِ الطُّورِ نَارًا قَالَ لِأَهْلِهِ امْكُثُوا إِنِّي آنَسْتُ نَارًا لَّعَلِّي آتِيكُمْ مِنْهَا بِخَبَرٍ أَوْ جَذْوَةٍ
مِّنَ النَّارِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَصْطَلُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾

After completing the promised time, Moses (sws) left with his family for Egypt. It is not specified either by the Qur'ān or the Torah whether the term completed was eight years or ten. However, it is evident from the Torah that with his two children besides his wife, when they reached the mount of Ṭūr, the night was dark and it was cold too. Finding the way in pitch darkness was also difficult. In the meantime, he saw something shining from the side of the mount of Ṭūr. He told his wife and children to stay there whilst he would go to find out what was shining out there. If he could find some people there, he may be able to find out the way from them or bring an live ember so that they could warm themselves from its heat.

فَلَمَّا أَتَاهَا نُودِيَ مِنْ شَاطِئِ الْوَادِ الْأَيْمَنِ فِي الْبُقْعَةِ الْمُبَارَكَةِ مِنَ الشَّجَرَةِ أَن يُّوسَىٰ إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢٨﴾

All parts of this verse have been explained in the exegesis of Sūrah Ṭahā and Sūrah al-Naml earlier. When Moses (sws) reached the place where he had sighted the fire, he heard a voice from a tree that was situated at a holy place that was near the blessed valley of the mountain. It said: “It is me, God of the worlds.”

Here, three loci are mentioned that determine the origin of the voice. Firstly, it came from the blessed valley. Secondly, this valley was in a blessed area. Thirdly, it came from a tree. The purpose of all these determinants is that Moses (sws) did not hear this voice from some vague or ambiguous origin. It came from a specific and known origin. It was from a sacred tree that was in a blessed place situated in a holy valley. If a certain valley, place and tree are blessed, then it is evidence to the fact that the Almighty has chosen them for the manifestation of His radiance. An essential consequence of this is that such an area be the place where His angels frequent and which is totally pure and secure. Readers may well take a look at verse 8 of Sūrah al-Naml.

While the first part of the verse expressed the purity and exalted nature of the place of origin of the voice, the last part of the verse expresses the contents of the voice, viz. *إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ* which Moses (sws) heard the foremost. It was said that he had come to fetch fire but the place did not have fire; it was actually God, Lord of the worlds, Who is found there. The Almighty actually introduced Himself by some words. The expression *رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ* has a very broad connotation. For this reason, the same subject is discussed at some other instances in some other words. For example, the words used in verse 9 of Sūrah al-Naml are: *إِنَّهُ أَنَا اللَّهُ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ* (It is Me, God, the Powerful, the Wise). This is just an explanation of the expression *رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ*.

وَأَن أَلْقِ عَصَاكَ فَلَمَّا رَآهَا تُهَنَّرُ كَاَنَّهُ أَجَانٌّ وَنِيَ مُدْبِرًا وَلَمْ يُعَقِّبْ يُّوسَىٰ أَقْبِلْ وَلَا تَخَفْ إِنَّكَ مِنَ الْأُمْنِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

At the same time, Moses (sws) was directed to throw down his staff. When Moses (sws)

27. So, when Moses (sws) completed the term and departed with his family, he saw a flame towards the mount of Sinai. He said to his family: “Stay here that I may go and bring some news from there or bring an ignited piece of flame so that you may warm yourselves.”

28. So, when he came near it in the blessed place from the side of the valley of Ayman, he heard a voice from the tree: “Moses! I am God, Lord of the worlds and that you throw down you staff.”

29. Then when he saw it slithering as if it was a serpent, he turned and fled and then did not look back. Moses! Come forward and fear not; you are absolutely secure.

complied, he saw that the staff was moving about like a serpent. He was struck with fear to see this and ran backwards in such a way that he did not have the courage to even look back. The expression وَلَمْ يُعَقِّبْ has been explained under verse 11 of Sūrah al-Naml.

Prophets of God face the initial experience of prophet hood in a sudden and unexpected manner. Neither do they have any concept about it nor do they have any desire for it. For this reason, initially they feel worried. Gradually, the Almighty makes them used to this experience. As far as the soothsayers, magicians and false oracles are concerned, they already have a scheme in their minds for which they work hard and undertake all sorts of routines. When some scheme to mislead the masses dawns upon them, they consider it to be a great success. However, the revered prophets of God are totally bereft of such machinations. For this reason, when they are given some miracle, it is a totally unique thing for them. The biggest feat of the magicians that belonged to the nation to whom Moses (sws) was to be sent was that they turned staffs and ropes into serpents. To achieve this feat, they would go through various hard routines and exercises. When they succeeded in it, they would consider it to be the greatest achievement of their lives. Contrary to this, when God converted the staff of Moses (sws) into a snake, he became afraid and ran from it. Here, the Almighty has specially highlighted this very aspect so that Moses's (sws) reaction when he saw the miracle which the Pharaoh and his people regarded to be a product of magic could be known.

When Moses (sws) was overcome by this sudden fear, the Almighty assured him in a very affectionate way: يٰمُوسٰى اَقْبِلْ وَلَا تَخَفْ اِنَّكَ مِنَ الْاٰمِنِيْنَ. Moses (sws) should come forward, pick it up; there was no danger for him in it. The danger actually lurked for his enemy. He was secure from every form of peril. In verse 10 of Sūrah al-Naml, the words used are: لَا يَخَافُ لَدَيَّ الْاٰرْسُلُوْنَ (messengers of God should have no fear in My presence). What is implied is that Moses (sws) is God's messenger. God equips His messengers with special weaponry. The danger that arises from it is for their enemies and not for them.

أَسْلُكْ يَدَكَ فِي جَيْبِكَ تَخْرُجْ بَيْضًا مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوِّءٍ ۚ وَأَضْمُ إِلَيْكَ جَنَاحَكَ مِنَ الرَّهْبِ ۖ فَذٰلِكَ بُرْهَانُكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِۦ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا فَٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾

Expressed in this verse is the manner in which the second miracle given to Moses (sws) would manifest itself: he should insert his hand in his armpit; when he takes it out, it will be pure white and this whiteness will not be because of any sickness. The words وَأَضْمُ إِلَيْكَ جَنَاحَكَ مِنَ الرَّهْبِ describe the way in which the hand should be inserted: just as someone presses his arm because of fear, he too should insert his hand in his armpit and press it. In Sūrah Tāhā, the words used are:

وَأَضْمُ يَدَكَ إِلَىٰ جَنَاحِكَ تَخْرُجْ بَيْضًا مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوِّءٍ (٢٠:٢٢)

And press your hand towards your armpit; it will emerge white from there without any illness. (20:22)

The expression مِنَ الرَّهْبِ occurs here the way مِنَ الدُّلِ and مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ occur at other instances in the Qur'ān.³¹

30. Put your hand in your armpit. It will come out white without any ailment and draw back your arm the way it is drawn back in fear. Thus these are two signs from your Lord to go to the Pharaoh and his courtiers. Indeed, they are a very insolent people.

31. See, respectively: 17:111 and 17:24. (Translator)

A verb is suppressed before *إِلَى* in *إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا أَقْوَمَ فَسَقِينَ*. Examples of such suppression can be seen in the earlier *sūrahs* and are forthcoming as well. The implied meaning is: “Go to the Pharaoh and his people – with these two clear signs from your Lord – to warn them.” The reason why he has been given these signs and sent to the Pharaoh and his people is stated in the last part of the verse: *إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا أَقْوَمَ فَسَقِينَ*: they are very defiant and rebellious. He should go to them and inform them of the consequences of this rebellious behaviour and communicate the truth to them conclusively through these clear signs.

32 *قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي قَتَلْتُ مِنْهُمْ نَفْسًا فَأَخَافُ أَنْ يَقْتُلُونِ*

Moses (sws) in compliance to God’s directive became ready for his assignment. However, at the same time, he expressed a worry: he had killed a person and feared that they would kill him as soon as they see him. In other words, he meant that in all probability they would have forgotten his crime, since he would be going to his people after eight or ten years; however, if he went to them as a messenger of God, how would they let him go free.

33 *وَأَخِي هَارُونُ هُوَ أَفْضَلُ مِنِّي لِسَانًا فَأَرْسَلْهُ مَعِيَ رِدْءًا يُصَدِّقُنِي إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَنْ يُكَذِّبُونِ*

The word *رِدْءًا* means “helper.” At other places the word *وَزِير* is used.

The word *يُصَدِّقُنِي* means *يُؤَيِّدُنِي* (he may help me).

Expressed in this verse is another difficulty that Moses (sws) had. It is evident in the exegesis of *Sūrah Tāhā* that he felt that he was not a good orator in line with the great responsibility imposed on him. For this reason, he requested the Almighty to make his brother Aaron his helper since he was very eloquent. The words used in *Sūrah Tāhā* are: *فِي نُسُجِكَ كَثِيرًا وَتَذَكَّرُكَ كَثِيرًا* (so that both of us can together extol You as much as possible and spread your word as far as possible, 20:33-34)).

The words *إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَنْ يُكَذِّبُونِ* express the fear of Moses (sws) that they will not easily listen to him and will in fact deny him. So God should help him through his eloquent brother so that both of them could convey the truth conclusively with full force.

34 *قَالَ سَنَشُدُّ عَضُدَكَ بِأَخِيكَ وَنَجْعَلُ لَكُمَا سُلْطَانًا فَلَا يَصِلُونَ إِلَيْكُمَا بِآيَاتِنَا أَنْتُمَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَكُمَا الْغَالِبُونَ*

The word *سُلْطَان* here means “dominance, majesty and awe.”

There are two possibilities in the case of *بِآيَاتِنَا*. One of them is that it relates to *نَجْعَلُ لَكُمَا سُلْطَانًا*. In this case, it would mean: “We will strike your awe in the people of the Pharaoh through miracles.” The other option is to regard a verb to be suppressed before it. An example of such suppression can be seen in verse 32 earlier.

The verse implies that the Almighty accepted the request of Moses (sws) regarding Aaron (sws). At the same time, God assured him that He would strike such awe in the hearts of the people of the Pharaoh that they would not even dare to harm him. Thus, it is a fact that even

32. He said: “Lord! I have killed one of them; so I fear that they will kill me.”

33. “And my brother Aaron is more eloquent than me. Send him with me also as my helper that he may support me. I fear that these people will reject me.”

34. God said: “We will also strengthen your arm with your brother and bestow a special awe on you both so that they are not able to harm you. So, go with Our signs both of you and those who follow you will remain dominant.”

before the contest, the Pharaoh and his people were so over-awed by Moses (sws) that, in spite of their desire to get rid of him, they could not dare do so. The greatest reason of this that becomes evident from a study of the Torah is that the Pharaoh and his chiefs did not regard Moses (sws) to be a liar. On the contrary, they were fully convinced that he was a truthful person. However, since his message was regarded by them to be against their interests, they were not prepared to accept it. Yet, they knew that if they tried to harm him in any way, they would not be spared. For this reason, in spite of all their enmity and malice, they dared not kill him. It is evident from the Torah that whenever a calamity descended on Egypt, they would request Moses (sws) to pray to God to avert it.

فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ مُوسَىٰ بِآيَاتِنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ قَالُوا مَا هَٰذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّفْتَرًى وَمَا سَعَيْنَا بِهَٰذَا فِي آبَائِنَا الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٣٥﴾

When Moses (sws) came over to the Pharaoh and his nation with these indubitable signs, they regarded these to be a product of magic and began spreading propaganda against his call towards monotheism. They contended that his teachings were against the traditions of their forefathers.

By the expression سِحْرٌ مُّفْتَرًى, they meant that these miracles were worked by Moses (sws) through magic, but he falsely ascribed them to God in order to strike awe and fear in them. The words مَا سَعَيْنَا بِهَٰذَا فِي آبَائِنَا الْأَوَّلِينَ refer to the call of Moses (sws) towards monotheism. In other words, they contended that this claim of Moses (sws) that he was a messenger of God was uniquely strange. They had not heard about any God of the worlds from their forefathers. Verse 38 ahead will further explain this. Another instance where precisely this subject is brought up is: مَا سَعَيْنَا بِهَٰذَا فِي الْآخِرَةِ (٧:٣٨) (we have not heard of this in this later period (38:7)).

وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰ رَبِّي أَعْلَمُ بِمَن جَاءَ بِآلِهَدًى مِّنْ عِنْدِهِ وَمَن تَكُونُ لَهُ عَاقِبَةُ الدَّارِ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

This was a future challenge thrown to them by Moses (sws): they were regarding him to be a fabricator, while the fact was that his Lord knew who had come to them with His guidance and who were the people who were intentionally denying; similarly, it was his Lord Who knew those who would succeed in the Hereafter and those who would end up as utter losers. In other words, Moses (sws) proclaimed in a very eloquent and soft way that his companions, God willing, would remain dominant and succeed and his opponents would be humiliated and routed.

It is certain that those who deny the guidance sent by God will be unjust to themselves and such unjust people never succeed. It is evident that a parallel sentence is suppressed. I have explained it.

وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ مَا عَلِمْتُ لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَٰهٍ غَيْرِي ۚ فَأَوْقِدْ لِّي يَهُامُنْ عَلَى الطِّينِ فَاجْعَلْ لِّي صَرْحًا لَّعَلِّي أَطَّلِعُ إِلَى إِلَٰهِ مُوسَىٰ وَإِنِّي لَأَظُنُّهُ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾

Hāmān has been mentioned earlier in the *sūrah*. It is evident from here as well that he had the

35. So, when Moses came to them with Our very clear signs, they said: "This is merely a magic fabricated and we have never heard of such things from our predecessors."

36. And Moses said: "My Lord knows full well the one who has come from Him with guidance and whose fate in the Hereafter is good. The unjust will never attain success."

37. And the Pharaoh said: "Courtiers! I am not aware of any god for you except myself. So, O Hāmān! Ignite bricks of clay for me and build for me a tall palace that I may peep on the God of Moses. I regard him to be liar."

same status in the court of the Pharaoh as that of a prime minister or at least a minister of construction and development.

The expression *أَوْقَدَ عَلَى الطِّينِ* can mean to make a kiln of bricks and can also mean to build a building of clay and heat it with fire. It is evident from a study of history that a common way of construction in Nineveh and Egypt was to build a house with mud and then have it heated strongly with flames. This would create designs on the walls and protect it from the effects of rain and wind.

The preposition *إِلَى* in *إِلَى إِلَهِ مُوسَى* indicates there exists a *taḍmīn* here. In other words, the whole statement would be to the effect: *لعل أطمع على الصرح فانظر إلى إله موسى* (so that I can peep at the building and look at the God of Moses). Obviously, these words were meant to make fun of Moses (sws). It is also evident from verse 47 of Sūrah al-Zukhruf that these words were meant for this purpose.

The Pharaoh first addressed his courtiers by saying that he did not know of the God of the worlds whose messenger Moses (sws) was posing to be. He contended that he regarded himself alone to be their deity. In other words, people must be very aware of this mischief worked by him. After this, he addressed Hāmān and told him to make a kiln of bricks and make a tall building so that he could climb on it and peep on the Lord of Moses (sws) as to where he was sitting. He regarded this person to be an absolute liar. It may be kept in mind that at times, autocrats and tyrants make fun of absolutely evident facts in this way. Their blind followers construe this scoffing as an argument in their favour and many a foolish ones think that there is truth in this. It may well be that the devotees of the Pharaoh would have taken this mocking comment seriously because they regarded the Pharaoh to be an avatar of their Sun God. How could it be difficult for an avatar to take a peep into the sides and borders of the skies? In Sūrah al-Mu'min, the following statement of the Pharaoh is cited: *يَهَامُنُ ابْنُ بَعْزَالٍ عَلَيَّ أَبَدْتُ الْأَسْبَابَ اسْبَابَ السَّمَوَاتِ* (37-36: 40) (“O Hāmān! Build me a tower that I may reach the borders – the borders of the heavens,” (40:36-37)). In this respect, it could have been a scheme hatched by him to befool the masses.

38 *وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا هُودًا جُنُودًا فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمُ ابْنَاءَ اللَّهِ لَا يُرْجَعُونَ*

The expression *بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ* has been explained at an appropriate place of this exegesis. The meaning of *إِسْتَكْبَارًا بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ* (which occurs in this verse) is not different. Only the One Who has created the heavens and the earth and Who is administering them has the right to express greatness and superiority. If they, who neither have any share in the creation of the heavens and the earth nor in governing them, show arrogance, then this only shows their baselessness. The Creator of this universe does not give much respite to such arrogance. It may be kept in mind that disobeying the law of the real King of this world also amount to *إِسْتِكْبَارًا بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ* and this is nothing but following the example set by the Pharaoh.

The words *وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمُ ابْنَاءَ اللَّهِ لَا يُرْجَعُونَ* state the reason for this arrogance: they thought that God would let them go without questioning and that they will not return to Him for any accountability.

39 *فَأَخَذْنَاهُ وَجُنُودَهُ فَنَبَذْنَاهُمْ فِي الْيَمِّ فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الظَّالِمِينَ*

This verse depicts the fate of their arrogance: God seized the Pharaoh and his armies and threw

38. And he and his armies showed arrogance without any reason and they thought that they will never have to return to Us.

39. So, We seized him and his armies. Thus We flung them into the sea. Then see the fate the unjust met!

them in the sea. The scheme implemented by God to seize them has been described in detail in the previous *sūrahs*, in particular, *Sūrah Tāhā*. The words *فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الظَّالِمِينَ* direct attention to the reality for which this tale has been recounted. They sound an assurance to the Prophet (sws) and remind and warn the arrogant pharaohs of his times who had adopted the same attitude with his message as the one adopted by the Pharaoh and his chiefs and supporters about Moses (sws).

40 ﴿وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَدْعُونَ إِلَى النَّارِ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ لَا يُنصَرُونَ﴾

The word *جَعَلْنَا* here encompasses the meaning of *أَمَلْنَا*. Examples of this usage can be seen in the earlier *sūrahs*. Also there occurs a suppression of an incomplete verb before: *يَدْعُونَ*.

This verse further explains the arrogance of these people alluded to in the previous verse: God gave them respite in this world and they stuck to their task of becoming leaders who would call others to Hell, and, on the Day of Judgement, such will be their plight that they will not receive help from anywhere. All those who considered them their leaders in the previous world will forsake them. Each person will be engrossed in his own self. Neither will the leaders be of any benefit to the followers nor will the followers be of any avail to the leaders.

41 ﴿وَأَتَيْنَاهُم فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا لَعْنَةً وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ هُمْ مِنَ الْمَقْبُوحِينَ﴾

The verse states the Almighty made curse follow them eternally in the very world wherein they arrogantly led other people astray. In the Hereafter too, they will be humiliated. The words used in *Sūrah Hūd* are:

فَاتَّبَعُوا أَمْرَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَا أَمْرُ فِرْعَوْنَ بِرَشِيدٍ. يَقْدَمُ قَوْمَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَأَوْرَدَهُمُ النَّارَ وَبِئْسَ الْوِرْدُ الْمَوْرُودُ. وَأَتَيْنَاهُمْ فِي هَذِهِ لَعْنَةً وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ بِئْسَ الرَّفْدُ الْمَرْفُودُ. (٩٩-٩٧: ١١)

So, they followed the opinion of the Pharaoh and the opinion of the Pharaoh was not correct. On the Day of Judgement, he will be in front of his nation and will land them into the Fire and how evil is this place of landing. And in this world also a curse has been made to follow them and on the Day of Judgement too. And what evil will be this reward that they will get. (11:97-98)

42 ﴿وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا أَهْلَكْنَا الْقُرُونَ الْأُولَىٰ بَصَائِرَ لِلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ﴾

Once the fate of the wrongdoers was depicted in the previous verses, this verse mentions the blessings and reward of God on the oppressed, which has been referred to in the beginning of the anecdote in verse 5. It said that, after killing the previous nations, God gave the Book to Moses. The attributes of this book was that it was an insight, guidance and mercy for the people. It was an insight for the people because it engendered various abilities in the mind and the heart and also the capability to reflect and deliberate. The purpose was to explain that it consisted of such verses and

40. And in this world We made them leaders who call towards Hell and on the Day of Judgement, they will not be helped.

41. And in this world We put a curse on them and on the Day of Judgement, they will be the ones ruined.

42. And after destroying the earlier nations, We gave the Book to Moses as one that gives insights to people and as a guide and mercy that they may be reminded.

arguments which would open the eyes. The expression هُدًى وَرَحْمَةً has been explained earlier that when these two words occur together, they connote guidance (هُدًى) in the beginning (referring to this worldly life) and connote mercy (رَحْمَةً) in the end (referring to the next-worldly life).

It may be noted that if a nation is given the book of God and His *sharī'ah*, then it is tantamount to be given the political and religious leadership of this world. However, this is conditional to giving due value to this gift of God's book. The Israelites were the first to receive this gift. It is evident from the words بَعْدَ مَا أَهْلَكْنَا الْقُرُونَ الْأُولَى that in the shape of a formal book, this greatest gift of God was given foremost to the Israelites by Moses (sws). However, they treated this Book in a very contemptuous manner, the details of which have been mentioned in Sūrah al-Baqarah.

43 وَمَا كُنْتَ بِجَانِبِ الْعَرْشِ إِذْ قَضَيْنَا إِلَى مُوسَى الْأَمْرَ وَمَا كُنْتَ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾

At the end of this anecdote the last two verses are addressed to the Prophet Muḥammad (sws). They validate his prophet hood and the address is actually directed to the Jews and to the Quraysh. It is stated that at the time Moses (sws) was given the book, he was neither present on the western side of the mount of Ṭūr when the Almighty had informed Moses (sws) after taking a decision, nor was he present with those, who at that time stood waiting for the Torah at the base of the mountain.

The expression بِجَانِبِ الْعَرْشِ means بِجَانِبِ الطُّورِ الْعَرْشِ.

In the expression قَضَيْنَا إِلَى مُوسَى الْأَمْرَ the word قَضَيْنَا encompasses the meaning of عَهَدْنَا. A similar usage is found in (١٢٥:٢) عَهْدْنَا إِلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ.

The word الشَّاهِدِينَ in وَمَا كُنْتَ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ alludes to the nation of Moses (sws). This is a reference to the time when Moses (sws) had left his people at the base of the mountain and in accordance with the divine directive had gone alone to receive the Torah. During this time, his nation waited for his return and it is at this juncture that the incident of Sāmīrī took place. Details of all these incidents are found in earlier *sūrah*s.

The purpose of mentioning all this is that at the time when the Torah was given to Moses (sws), the Prophet (sws) was neither present with Moses (sws) nor with his nation, so how could he have known this anecdote with these details in all their correctness? This was a clear evidence of the fact that God had informed him about this anecdote through divine revelation and that he was God's messenger.

It may be kept in mind that the detail and accuracy with which the anecdote of Moses (sws) is mentioned in the Qur'ān is not found as such in the Torah. If one compares even that part of the anecdote mentioned in this very *sūrah* with how it is described in the Torah, one may come to realise that the description of the Torah is totally incoherent and interpolated, and is also devoid of the essential components which form the essence of the anecdote. The question is that how did the Prophet (sws) come to know of all these facts with such accuracy and precision. If obduracy compels someone to say that the source of the Prophet (sws) in this regard were some People of the Book of his times, then this is self-evidently wrong. If a person cites anecdotes and events on the basis of hearsay and narrates them, then they have to be in accordance with their general narration and not totally against it. And he narrates them in such a manner that every fair minded person cries out that the true version of the incident is the one which the Qur'ān has described and

43. And you were neither present on the western side of the mountain when We informed Moses of Our decision and nor were you among those people who were present there.

not the one which is related in the Torah. But for fear of a lack of space, I would have compared the two accounts and shown that the real components of the anecdote in the Torah are either missing or distorted. On the other hand, the Qur'ān has presented the essential components in such a logical and coherent way that their wisdom sinks into the hearts of its own accord.

44. وَلَكِنَّا أَنْشَأْنَا قُرُونًا فَتَطَاوَلَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْعُمُرُ ۖ وَمَا كُنْتَ ثَاوِيًا فِي أَهْلِ مَدْيَنَ تَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِنَا ۚ وَلَكِنَّا كُنَّا مُرْسِلِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾

The initial part of this verse is related to the previous one. The sense of the discourse would be: You were not aware of these events; but We made you aware of them; and this We did because We produced many generations after Moses; a great time lapsed and people forgot this book of Ours which was sent as guidance and mercy; hence, it was essential that We revive this guidance through you.

Here, words to the effect فَتَسُو الذِّكْرَ (they forgot these events) are suppressed after: فَتَطَاوَلَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْعُمُرُ.

The words وَمَا كُنْتَ ثَاوِيًا فِي أَهْلِ مَدْيَنَ imply that, just as the Prophet (sws) was not present on the western side of the mount Tūr when Moses (sws) was being given the Torah, in a similar way, he was not present in Madyan that he may have known the details of what happened during the time Moses (sws) spent there and what happened to the call of Shu'ayb (sws) and the fate of his nation. The Prophet (sws) was not aware of any of these details, but God made him aware of them. God's purpose was to make him His messenger, the way He made some others His messengers earlier on. The style found in the words كُنَّا مُرْسِلِينَ is the same as one in (١٧:٢١) كُنَّا فَاعِلِينَ. This style expresses a certain decision and a strong will. The addition of تَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِنَا after أَهْلِ مَدْيَنَ alludes to the anecdote of Shu'ayb (sws) which has been mentioned in many *sūrah*s of the Qur'ān. The implication is that he was not deputed to warn and deliver glad tidings to the people of that area but God made him aware of its circumstances. This is a very clear proof of the fact that God intended to assign the same task to him as He assigned to messengers before him. Unfortunate are the people who do not understand this.

45. وَمَا كُنْتَ بِجَانِبِ الطُّورِ إِذْ نَادَيْنَا وَلَكِنْ رَحْمَةً مِّن رَّبِّكَ لِتُنْذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّا أَتَتْهُمْ مِّن نَّذِيرٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

The verse states that, just as the Prophet (sws) was not present at Madyan, he was similarly not present at the side of the mount Tūr, when God had called out to Moses (sws). This is a reference to the call mentioned in verse 30 earlier. The implication is that he had no knowledge of all these events but God's mercy intended to make him a messenger. For this reason, all these events were brought to his knowledge. These are very clear proofs of his prophet hood. Before the word رَحْمَةً a verb to the effect أَرْسَلْنَاكَ is suppressed.

This is a reference to the purpose of sending Muḥammad (sws): God has made all this arrangement to warn people to whom no warner had come earlier, so that that they be reminded. This is a reference to the Ishmaelites. They were not conversant with the book of God and His

44. But We raised up many nations; then a period of time passed on them [and they forgot Our reminder; so, We sent you as a messenger to remind them] and you were also not stationed among the people of Madyan when We were reciting Our revelations but We were to send you as a messenger [so We informed you of those events].

45. And you were also not present aside Tūr when We called Moses but you [were sent] by the grace of your Lord [that] you may warn a nation to which no warner came before you so that they may be reminded.

sharī'ah. No messenger had come to them before Muḥammad (sws). In accordance with the prayer of Abraham (sws) the details of which can be seen in the earlier *sūrah*s, the Almighty sent him to them for their guidance. He was someone who belonged to them.

The implication is that this was a great mercy that they had encountered if they duly valued it. Concealed in this is also the fact that if they did not value it duly, then it could also become a great calamity for them. The established practice of God is that if a nation did not mend its ways after it was warned by a warner sent by Him, it was destroyed.

Section II: Verses (47-61)

It is evident from the above verses which are addressed to the Prophet (sws) that just as the Almighty sent Moses (sws) to the Pharaoh and his people as a messenger, in a similar way, He sent Muḥammad (sws) to the Quraysh as His messenger. His messenger hood was a great boon if they gave regard to it. It could also prove to be a great bane if they did not value it. In the coming verses, this subject is further emphasised: it is said that the purpose of sending this messenger was to communicate the truth conclusively to them. If they were now afflicted by some torment, they could say that the Almighty has not forewarned them. However, such was the situation of these people that they raised an objection taught to them by the Jews on God's messenger – the objection that why was he not given the kind of miracles given to Moses (sws). The Prophet (sws) is told to ask them as to when did the people of Moses (sws) regard these miracles with seriousness so that it could be expected of them to take them seriously? Mentioned then is praise for those People of the Book who supported the Qur'ān in deference to the prophecies mentioned in their scriptures and who were patiently combating the uproar raised by their people. Moreover, a fear of the Quraysh had been allayed: they thought that if they accepted the message of the Qur'ān, they would be uprooted from the land. They are reassured that if they accepted this message, there would be no danger for them. However, if they rejected it, then they shall certainly be destroyed in accordance with the established practice of God. Readers may proceed to study the verses in this background.

Text and Translation

وَلَوْلَا أَنْ تُصِيبَهُمْ مُصِيبَةٌ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ فَيَقُولُوا رَبَّنَا لَوْلَا أَرْسَلْتَ إِلَيْنَا رَسُولًا فَنَتَّبِعَ آيَاتِكَ وَنَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾ فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ عِنْدِنَا قَالُوا لَوْلَا أَوْتِيَ مِثْلُ مَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ أَوْ لَكُم يَكْفُرُوا بِمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ مِنْ قَبْلُ قَالُوا سِحْرَانِ تَظَاهَرَا ۖ وَقَالُوا إِنَّا بِكُلِّ كَفْرٍ لَّوْنٌ ﴿٤٨﴾ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِكِتَابٍ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ هُوَ أَهْدَىٰ مِنْهُمَا أَتَّبِعُهُ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾ فَإِنْ لَّمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَكَ فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّهُمَا يُتَّبِعُونَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ ۖ وَمَنْ أَضَلُّ مِمَّنِ اتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ بِغَيْرِ هُدًى مِّنَ اللَّهِ ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٥٠﴾ وَكَذَٰلِكَ فَصَلْنَا لَهُمُ الْقَوْلَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٥١﴾ الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ هُمْ بِهِ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾ وَإِذَا يُثْلَغُ عَلَيْهِمْ قَالُوا امْنَابِهٖ إِنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ يُؤْتَوْنَ أَجْرَهُمْ مَّرَّتَيْنِ بِمَا صَبَرُوا وَيَدْرَءُونَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ ۖ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾ وَإِذَا سَبَّحُوا اللَّغْوَ أَعْرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَقَالُوا إِنَّا عَابِدُونَ لَكُمُ أَعْمَالُكُمْ سَلِّمْ عَلَيْنَا ۖ لَّا نَبْتَغِي الْجَاهِلِينَ ﴿٥٥﴾ إِنَّكَ لَا تَهْدِي مَنْ أَحْبَبْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾ وَقَالُوا إِنْ تَتَّبِعِ الْهُدَىٰ مَعَنَا نَخْطِفُ مِنْ أَرْضِنَا أَوْ لَكُم نَبْكُنَّ لَهُمْ حَرَمًا مِنَّا

يُجَبِّى إِلَيْهِ شَرَّتْ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ رَزَقًا مِّنْ لَّدُنَّا وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾ وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِن قَرْيَةٍ بَطَرَتْ مَعِيشَتَهَا فَتِلْكَ مَسْكِنُهُمْ لَمْ تَسْكُنْ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ۖ وَكُنَّا نَحْنُ الْوَارِثِينَ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ مُهْلِكَ الْقُرَىٰ حَتَّىٰ يَبْعَثَ فِي أُمِّهَا رَسُولًا يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِنَا ۚ وَمَا كُنَّا مُهْلِكِي الْقُرَىٰ إِلَّا وَأَهْلُهَا ظَالِمُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾ وَمَا أَوْتَيْنَاهُم مِّن شَيْءٍ فَمَتَّاعًا الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَزِينَتَهَا ۚ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَىٰ ۖ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾ أَكْفَرْنَا وَعَدْنَاهُ وَعَدًا حَسَنًا فَهُوَ لَا يَخِفُّ بِهٖ كَمَنْ مَّتَّعْنَاهُ مَتَاعَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ثُمَّ هُوَ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ مِنَ الْمُخْضَرِّينَ ﴿٥٨﴾

[And We would not have sent messengers] would they not, when stricken by a calamity because of their deeds, say: “Our Lord! Why did you not send a messenger to us so that we would have followed Your revelations and become among the believers.” So, when the truth came to them from Us, they said: “Why was he not given the like of what was given to Moses?” Have such people not denied what was given to Moses earlier? They said: “Both are accomplished magicians who have teamed up with one another,” and said “We deny all of them.” (47-48)

Tell them: “If you deny it, bring another Book from God which provides better guidance than both of them. I will follow it, if you are truthful.” If they do not accept this challenge of yours, be convinced that they are followers of their own desires only. And who can be more in error than those who follow their own desire without any guidance from God. God will never guide the unjust. (49-50)

And We provided them with successive books that they may be reminded. And those whom We earlier bestowed the Book, believe in it. And when it is recited out to them, they say: “We believe in it. It is indeed a truth from our Lord. We are its believers even before its arrival.” It is these people who will receive a double reward because they persevered and retaliate vice with virtue and spend from the sustenance We have given them. And when they listen to nonsensical talk, they pay no heed to it and say: “To us our deeds and to you, yours. Thus accept our salutation. We do not like to get entangled with the ignorant.” (51-55)

You cannot guide whomsoever you want to. In fact, it is God Who guides whomsoever He wants to and He alone fully knows the guided. (56)

And they say: “If we become followers of this guidance with you, we will be driven from our country.” Did We not firmly plant them in a safe sanctuary towards which the produce of everything is being drawn to? But most of them do not know this. (57)

And how many a nation have shown ingratitude to their means of living whom We have destroyed. Thus, these are their settlements which were not inhabited after them but a little, and We alone were their heirs. And your Lord is not One Who destroys cities unless He sends a messenger to their central city who recites Our revelations before them. And We do not destroy cities unless its inhabitants become unjust to their own selves. (58-59)

And whatever things you have been given are only resources of this world and its finery. And whatever is with God is better and lasting also. So, do you not understand? He with whom We have made a goodly promise; thus he will certainly receive what is promised will become like him who We bestowed with worldly resources, then he will be of those who are going to be summoned on the Day of Judgement. (60-61)

Explanation

وَلَوْلَا أَنْ تُصِيبَهُمْ مُصِيبَةٌ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ فَيَقُولُوا رَبَّنَا لَوْلَا أَرْسَلْتَ إِلَيْنَا رَسُولًا فَنَتَّبِعَ آيَاتِكَ وَنَكُونُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾

In the presence of concomitant indications, the answer to the conditional clause *وَلَوْلَا* can be suppressed. Same is the case here. It has been revealed in the translation.

This is an expression of God's favour on the Quraysh or, in other words, on the Ishmaelites. It is also a warning to them at the same time. The implication is that without even sending a messenger, God could have seized them because of their misdeeds. However, God did not do this lest they present the excuse that no messenger had come to them and as a result, they would have professed faith in God's revelations and in His messenger. In order to not afford them with this excuse and to convey the truth to them conclusively, the Almighty sent a messenger to them. If they did not duly value this favour, they should remember that were not left with any excuse to deny the truth.

It is evident from this that the light of intellect and innate guidance found in human nature is sufficient to guide him and secure him from evil deeds. Had God punished people for their misdeeds merely on the basis of not following this innate guidance, this would not have been against justice. However, as a means of further conclusive communication to the truth, He sent messengers so that no one would be left with any excuse after them. For this reason, it has remained an established practice of God that every nation that denied its respective messenger was destroyed from the face of the earth.

فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ عِنْدِنَا قَالُوا لَوْلَا أُوتِيَ مِثْلَ مَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ أَوْ لَمَّا يَكْفُرُوا بِنَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ مِنْ قَبْلُ قَالُوا سِحْرَانِ تَظَاهَرَا ۖ وَقَالُوا إِنَّا بِكُمْ لَكَافِرُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾

The word *الْحَقُّ* (the truth) here connotes both the Book and the Messenger of God because, in essence, both are the same. The words *مِنْ عِنْدِنَا* refer to the exaltedness of this truth: it has come from God. So, whatever is against it is evil and is destined to perish.

It is stated that God revealed the truth in a conclusive way to dispel doubts and to not leave any person with any excuse to deny it, but these people were arguing why was not Muḥammad (sws) given the same miracles as were given to Moses (sws).

Concomitant indications show that this objection was spread by the Quraysh, but it was planted in their minds by the Jews. It will become evident from succeeding verses that, in those times, Jews had started to make evil schemes to incite the Quraysh against the Prophet (sws). This objection, too, originated from them. They told the Quraysh that this person claimed to be God's messenger but this was not how messengers were sent by God. They informed them that their messenger was given certain miracles by God; so why was this messenger not given miracles too. As simpletons, Quraysh could not understand this scheme of the Jews and began to raise this

46. [And We would not have sent messengers] would they not, when stricken by a calamity because of their deeds, say: "Our Lord! Why did you not send a messenger to us so that we would have followed Your revelations and become among the believers."

47. So, when the truth came to them from Us, they said: "Why was he not given the like of what was given to Moses?" Have such people not denied what was given to Moses earlier? They said: "Both are accomplished magicians who have teamed up with one another," and said "We deny all of them."

objection as well. Here, the Qur'ān has answered them by saying that did their brethren not deny the miracles which were given to Moses (sws)? Here, the verb has been ascribed because of inner similarity (أَوَلَمْ يَكْفُرُوا بِمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ مِنْ قَبْلُ). Verbs and pronouns are very commonly used in Arabic in this way. Examples can be seen in earlier *sūrah*s. In other words, when their hearts had arrogance in the same way that the people of the Pharaoh had, their deeds were the same as well. In order to gauge the eloquence of this scenario, what is alluded to earlier may be kept in mind: it were the Jews who had taught this objection.

The word سِحْر in قَالُوا سِحْرَانِ تَظَاهَرَا means سَاحِر. Yet an element of exaggeration is incorporated in the sentence. It is similar to زَيْدٌ عَدْلٌ (Zayd is justice). The word تَظَاهَرَا means mutual co-operation and connivance. Instead of professing faith in Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws) as a result of the various miracles shown by them, the people of the Pharaoh alleged that both of them were expert magicians who have united against them. Their words قَالُوا إِنَّا بِكُلِّ كَافِرُونَ imply that however much these two forcefully presented their miracles, they would not profess faith in them. They would reject them as well as their miracles.

48 ﴿قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِكِتَابٍ مِّنْ عِندِ اللَّهِ هُوَ أَهْدَىٰ مِنْهُمَا أَتَّبِعُ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ﴾

The verse implies that merely in their frenzy to oppose, they give reference to the miracles worked by Moses (sws), yet this was merely an excuse to raise an objection on the Prophet (sws). If they were truthful in what they claimed, why did they not profess faith in Moses (sws)? He should tell them that if there was any other book besides the Qur'ān and the Torah that will guide better than these books, then they should bring it and that the Prophet (sws) was ready to follow it.

The implication is that the quest for guidance is the requirement of the nature of every upright person. A person who does not have this quest is devoid of the basic traits of a human being. The Prophet (sws) should tell them that, in accordance with this very requirement of human nature, he believed in the Torah and in the Qur'ān, which provides even more guidance and if they were able to present a book that could guide him even more than these two, he was ready to follow it as well. Yet strange was their case: they neither believed in the Torah nor in the Qur'ān. It was only to argue with him that they were propagating this objection about him not showing miracles the way Moses (sws) did. The words إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ imply that the enthusiasm they were showing to support Moses (sws) was merely to escape guidance. Otherwise what does it mean that they neither followed Moses (sws) nor Muḥammad, yet raised the objection that the latter does not show the same miracles as the former.

It should be kept in mind that the Qur'ān does not refute the Torah: it attests to it. Its refutation is confined to the interpolations found in it. The Qur'ān does not claim that it is the only scripture that provides guidance; its claim is that it provides more and sounder guidance (أَهْدَىٰ وَأَتَمُّوهُ) than the Torah. One of the reasons for this is that it has presented God's guidance, firstly by cleansing it of all interpolations and secondly, it is the latest and most complete guidance from God about which the Torah itself had prophesied.

48. Tell them: "If you deny it, bring another Book from God which provides better guidance than both of them. I will follow it, if you are truthful."

فَإِنْ لَّمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَكَ فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ ۚ وَنَزَّلْنَا نُورَهُ عَلَى الْكَافَّةِ فَأَنزَلْنَا الْوَيْلَ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ بِالْأُولَىٰ ۚ وَمَنْ أَضَلُّ مِمَّنْ اتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ بَعِيدٌ ۚ هُدًى مِنَ اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾

The implication is that if these people do not present a book that gives more guidance than the Torah and the Qur'ān and are also not willing to follow either of these two, then this clearly shows that they want to follow their own desires. So who could be farther from guidance than those who want to follow their own whims leaving aside God's guidance? The desires of one's souls only want themselves to be fulfilled; they do not have the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood, good and evil and at times they are so forceful that they easily dominate a person's intellect. For this reason, the way to success for a person is to follow these desires in the light of God's guidance. If he starts following them without this light, he will definitely be doomed.

The words **إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ** imply that it is to save people from this destruction that can result from following desires, that God has revealed His guidance. Thus, unfortunate are those who do not duly value this guidance and consign their reins to these blind and deaf desires. Such people are ones who are unjust to their souls and – as a result of God’s established practice about providing guidance – are deprived of guidance.

وَلَقَدْ وَصَّلْنَا لَهُمُ الْقَوْلَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

The implication is that it is for guiding people that God has made this elaborate arrangement to never cease the continuity of providing guidance. It has always remained in force. When the bearers of the Torah brought by Moses (sws) became indifferent to it, the Almighty blessed Muhammad (sws) with His guidance. This is actually a re-statement of the topic discussed earlier in verses 45 and 46. The implication is that this Qur'ān is not something strange and alien. It is something very familiar. Hence, it is the People of the Book who should take lead in accepting it, because the favour that was given to them in its incomplete form is now being given to them in its complete form. Then it is the good fortune of the Ishmaelites too, to graciously embrace it because now God has directly blessed them with this favour. Till then, neither any messenger was sent to them nor was any book revealed to them.

الَّذِينَ اتَّيْنَهُمُ الْكِتَابُ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ هُمْ بِهِ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾ وَإِذَا يُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ قَالُوا أَمَّا بِنَايَ إِنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّنَا إِنَّكُنَّا مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾

The expression **الَّذِينَ** refers to the righteous among the People of the Book. It has been explained at an appropriate instance of this exegesis that when a verb is used for them in this manner in its active voice, it refers to the pious among them. Moreover, the attitude they have adopted about the Qur'ān as indicated in this verse also points to this.

This verse actually points to a testimony of the veracity of the Qur'ān: if some miscreants were showing aversion to the Qur'ān, then they should be ignored. This is because there were also the righteous People of the Book who were duly valuing the Qur'ān and taking initiative in professing faith in it. Such was their state that when this Book was recited out to them, they cried

49. If they do not accept this challenge of yours, be convinced that they are followers of their own desires only. And who can be more in error than those who follow their own desire without any guidance from God. God will never guide the unjust.

50. And We provided them with successive books that they may be reminded.

51. And those whom We earlier bestowed the Book, believe in it. And when it is recited out to them, they say: "We believe in it. It is indeed a truth from our Lord. We are its believers even before its arrival."

out that it was indeed from their Lord and that they believed in it from before.

The emphasis and specific tone found in **إِنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّنَا** shows that these people from the depth of their hearts attested to the contents of the previous scriptures mentioned by the Qur'ān –contrary to the miscreants of their nation. At the same time, they guided the leaders of the Quraysh that the Qur'ān was the truth and was from God; hence, they must duly honour it and should not call for their doom by opposing it.

The words **إِنَّا كُنَّا مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مُسْلِمِينَ** of these People of the Book point to the fact that they believed in the Qur'ān even before its revelation because of the prophecies found about it in their own scriptures. Verses 146 of Sūrah al-Baqarah and 114 of Sūrah al-An'ām also discuss this subject. Readers may look them up. It is evident from the word **مُسْلِمِينَ** that they were already waiting to consign themselves to this Messenger and this Book; thus when they encountered both of them, they submitted to them.

52 **أُولَٰئِكَ يُؤْتَوْنَ أَجْرَهُمْ مَرَّتَيْنِ بِمَا صَبَرُوا وَيَذَرُونَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ**

The verse states that these people will get a two-fold reward because of their perseverance. They will first be rewarded for diligently adhering to the religion they received from Moses (sws) in spite of the general waywardness of their nation. They will then be rewarded for continuing to eagerly await the final prophet and the perfect religion which was prophesied by Moses (sws), Jesus (sws) and other prophets. And when it came to them, they greeted it with gladness. There is a special reason for referring to their trait **بِمَا صَبَرُوا** (because of being steadfast). This must be kept in mind: these people had to bear a lot of traumatic calamities to continue to adhere to their previous religion and when they accepted Islam, they had to face the opposition of both their own nation and of the Quraysh. Yet, they faced these oppositions with perseverance. From among the Nazarenes, the hardships born by the followers of Simon at the hands of their self-styled innovators of their nation can be read in books of history. We have also referred to them at various places in this exegesis. It is these truthful people who were fortunate enough to accept the call of the Qur'ān and the Qur'ān has praised their love for the truth and their steadfastness in many of its *sūrahs*.

In the expression **وَيَذَرُونَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ** the word **حَسَنَةً** means steadfastness and forgiveness and **سَيِّئَةً** refers to the objections and allegations as well as the abuses and insults of the opposing group. When these people accepted Islam, their people regarded them to be the enemies of their ancestral religion and traitors of their nation and other enemies of the truth also made them a target of their curses and insults. However, these people responded to their unbecoming statements with true decency and forgiveness.

The words **وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ** also have a special background. At several instances has the Qur'ān alluded to the fact that the greatest impediment for the People of the Book, in particular the Jews, to accept Islam was their lust for wealth. This *sūrah* mentions their Qārūn later and other *sūrahs* also mention their greed and desire for wealth. People who are inflicted with the lust for wealth never have the courage to accept the truth. Jesus (sws) is reported to have said: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of

52. It is these people who will receive a double reward because they persevered and retaliate vice with virtue and spend from the sustenance We have given them.

God,” (Matthew, 19:24). It is evident from Sūrah al-Lahab that the greatest motive of Abū Lahab’s enmity for Islam was his greed and lust for wealth. Here, by referring to the trait of spending in charity of these righteous, the Qur’ān wants to explain that these people were never inflicted with the ailment of greed and avarice and hence were fortunate enough to accept Islam.

53 ﴿وَإِذَا سَبَّحُوا الضُّحَىٰ عَنْهُمْ وَقَالُوا إِنَّا أَعْبَاءُ وَكُنْمْ أَعْبَاءُكُمْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ لَا تُبْتِغَىٰ الْجَهْلِيْنَ ۚ﴾

This verse further explains وَيَذَرُونَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ. When these people hear the nonsensical talk of those who oppose them, they ignore them instead of getting entangled with them. The words قَالُوا إِنَّا أَعْبَاءُ وَكُنْمْ أَعْبَاءُكُمْ express the manner in which they ignore them: when their opponents engage in debate with them, they try to go their own way by saying that nothing much will come out of this debate; they are responsible for their deeds and their opponents for theirs. Let both choose the paths they want to tread.

The salutation سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ here implies parting ways. It is similar to what Abraham (sws) said to his father. It is a very polite way to disengage from someone. The words لَا تُبْتِغَىٰ الْجَهْلِيْنَ portray their attitude: while thinking that there is no benefit in engaging with the ignorant, they part ways after uttering salutations. This style of expression is found at a number of instances in the Qur’ān. At times, a person’s attitude takes the place of his words.

54 ﴿إِنَّكَ لَا تَهْدِي مَنْ أَحْبَبْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ ۝﴾

The word هدايت here means to rightly guide someone. This sentence is actually meant to assure the Prophet (sws) that he should not fret and bother himself too much to guide them. His responsibility is to communicate the message to them. He does not have the authority or power to make them accept guidance. This is the Almighty’s responsibility. He guides whomsoever He wills and He only knows who is worthy of being guided. The established practice of God about providing guidance to people has been explained at a number of places in this exegesis.

﴿وَقَالُوا إِنَّا نَتَّبِعُ الْهُدَىٰ مَعَكَ نَتَخَطَّفُ مِنْ أَرْضِنَا ۚ أَوَلَمْ نُبْنِ لَهُمْ حَرَمًا مِمَّا يُجْبَىٰ إِلَيْهِ كُنُوزٌ لَهُمْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ رِّزْقًا مِّنْ لَّدُنَّا وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ۝﴾

This verse cites and then answers another objection raised by the Quraysh: they would say that if they accept Islam and become companions of the followers, this would mean that they will make the whole world around them their enemies and these enemies will unite to dislodge them from the land.

It may be noted that the Quraysh thought that it was because of their religion of polytheism that they have political authority in Arabia. They regarded their deities to be a source of their

53. And when they listen to nonsensical talk, they pay no heed to it and say: “To us our deeds and to you, yours. Thus accept our salutation. We do not like to get entangled with the ignorant.”

54. You cannot guide whomsoever you want to. In fact, it is God Who guides whomsoever He wants to and He alone fully knows the guided.

55. And they say: “If we become followers of this guidance with you, we will be driven from our country.” Did We not firmly plant them in a safe sanctuary towards which the produce of everything is being drawn to? But most of them do not know this.

blessings. Moreover, in order to maintain their political dominance over all the Arab tribes they placed the idols of all these tribes in the House of God and in this way became their religious leaders. When the Prophet (sws) started to preach the message of monotheism, the Quraysh incited their nation against him by saying that if they worshipped only one God while leaving aside all their deities, then this would shatter their collective existence, all Arabia would turn and rise against them and they would be uprooted from this land. This is exactly the same objection as the one our leaders raise against the Islamic system, Islamic economics, Islamic social norms and Islamic punishments. They contend that if they adopt these, then this would mean that they will have to uproot all the existing systems relating to economics and to the society and earn the jeers of the whole world. It may be kept in mind that precisely the same objection was raised by the courtiers and leaders of the Pharaoh against the teachings of Moses (sws). They contended that this person is after destroying their grand culture (٦٣:٢٠) *بَطْرَ يَقْتِكُمُ الْبُشْكُ*. This has remained the most effective weapon of miscreants in opposing the system envisioned by God.

The words *أَوَلَمْ نَكُنْ لَهُمْ حَرَمًا آمِنًا يُجِبِي إِلَيْهِ تُبْرَتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ رِزْقًا مِّنْ لَّدُنَّا* answer their objection: these unaware people do not know that at the time when Abraham (sws) made his progeny inhabit this land, neither were the lives of people secure, nor did there exist any economic resources to live there. Yet Abraham (sws) did so and prayed for the sustenance and security of his progeny. It was a result of this prayer that today all sorts of produce from various places are drawn towards it. The blessings and favours Makkah would reap in the *hajj* season and in the sacred months have already been mentioned in previous *surahs*. These words of the verse point to this aspect. The implication is that all these blessings that they enjoyed were the result of God's grace and Abraham's prayer, but these wretched people thought that if they adopted the religion the Qur'ān was inviting them to and which was originally the religion of Abraham (sws), then they will be ruined.

The words *وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ* express sorrow on the attitude of these people: their majority is not aware of their own history.

In Sūrah al-'Ankabūt, this topic is brought up thus:

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا جَعَلْنَا حَرَمًا آمِنًا وَيَتَخَفَتُ النَّاسُ مِنْ حَوْلِهِمْ أَفَبِالْبَاطِلِ يُؤْمِنُونَ وَبِنِعْمَةِ اللَّهِ يَكْفُرُونَ (٦٧:٢٩)

Have they not seen that We have made for them a protected sanctuary and such is the situation around them that people are abducted from their whereabouts. So, do they profess faith in belief in evil and are ungrateful to God's favours! (29:67)

A detailed discussion can be seen on the word *تُبْرَتُ* in Sūrah Baqarah:⁵⁶ it does not merely refer to fruits. Also included in its connotation is food-related produce of various kinds.

The construction *تُبْرَتُ لَهُمْ حَرَمًا آمِنًا* is similar to (٥٥:٢٤) *وَلَيْسَكُنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَى لَهُمْ*. This is a fact and history bears witness to it that the Almighty made His House a very safe and secure place. It is not dependent on others for its protection. In fact, it protects others. In Sūrah Quraysh, *insha'Allāh*, this aspect will be discussed in detail.

56. See: Amin Ahsan Islahī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'an*, vol. 1, 381.

57 ﴿وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ بَطَرَتْ مَعِيشَتَهَا ۖ فَتِلْكَ مَسْكَنُهُمْ لَمْ تَمْسُكْ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ۚ وَكُنَّا نَحْنُ الْوَارِثِينَ ۝٥٨﴾

The verb *بَطَرَتْ* means “to show arrogance, pride and haughtiness.” Since it is not commonly used as a transitive verb, a lot of differences of opinion exist regarding the accusative state of *مَعِيشَتَهَا*. People generally think that there either occurs the suppression of a genitive particle (*ḥarf jar*) or that of a locus. The opinion of my mentor, Imām Farāhī, is that it is the object of the verb *أَهْلَكْنَا*. However, none of these opinions convince me. Some others regard *بَطَرَتْ* to encompass the meaning of *كَفَرَتْ*. This opinion seems acceptable. In Arabic, the phrase *بَطَرُ الْحَقِّ* is quite commonly used to connote *تَكَبَّرَ عَنْهُ* (he arrogantly ignored the truth). Similarly, if it is said: *بَطَرُ فَلَانِ التَّعَبُّةِ*, it would mean *اسْتَحْفَظَهَا فَكَفَرَهَا* (he showed ingratitude to a favour by regarding it to be trivial). These usages, in my opinion, employ *taḍmīn* (a verb encompassing the meaning of another verb) and, in the verse under discussion, the verb *بَطَر* is used thus.

This verse actually admonishes the Quraysh. They thought that the peace and prosperity this land enjoyed was as a result of their planning and hence they were very proud of their strategy. The fact was that they had received it purely because of God’s grace. The obligation they owed to this favour of God was by showing gratitude to Him, instead of showing arrogance. They must remember that many nations before them showed a similar attitude of arrogance on the favours they possessed. So God destroyed them because of this attitude and not far away from the Quraysh were the settlements of these nations. They passed by them regularly.

The word *تِلْكَ* shows that these settlements were known to the addressees. It refers to the areas in which nations like Thamūd and Lot (sws) lived. The trade routes of the Quraysh passed by them. What is discussed in *لَمْ تَمْسُكْ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا* is the same that has been brought up in verse 100 of Sūrah Hūd: *ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغُرَىٰ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْهَا قَائِمٌ وَحَصِيدٌ* (This is an account of these settlements that We narrate to you. Some of them are intact and others do not exist). This verse has been explained at its respective place and readers may look it up. In my opinion, this meaning can be understood in the light of linguistic principles. This verse can also mean that these settlements lost all their majesty and grandeur while it may be that at times some shepherds and nomads may have inhabited them.

The words *وَكُنَّا نَحْنُ الْوَارِثِينَ* refer to the fact that all those who regarded themselves to be the owners and rulers of these places and what they owned came into the ownership of God because it is He Who is the real owner of the heavens and the earth.

58 ﴿وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ مُهْلِكَ الْقُرَىٰ حَتَّىٰ يَبْعَثَ فِي أُمِّهَا رَسُولًا يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِنَا ۚ وَمَا كُنَّا مُهْلِكِي الْقُرَىٰ إِلَّا وَأَهْلُهَا ظَالِمُونَ ۝٥٩﴾

The subject of warning and admonition continues with further clarity and intensity. The verse states that regarding decisive worldly punishment, the established practice of God is that He did not destroy a nation unless He sent a messenger to its main city who recited His revelations to them. The implication was that as far as the Quraysh were concerned, the first phase of this

57. And how many a nation have shown ingratitude to their means of living whom We have destroyed. Thus, these are their settlements which were not inhabited after them but a little, and We alone were their heirs.

58. And your Lord is not One Who destroys cities unless He sends a messenger to their central city who recites Our revelations before them. And We do not destroy cities unless its inhabitants become unjust to their own selves.

established practice of God stood completed. God had sent His messenger to Makkah which was their main city. He was warning people by day and night through God's revelations. Now it was their attitude which would save them from His torment.

The words *وَمَا كُنَّا مُهْلِكِي الْقُرَىٰ إِلَّا وَأَهْلُهَا ظَالِمُونَ* mention the second phase of this divine practice: God did not destroy a city unless its inhabitants become unjust to their own selves. This means that in spite of all the warning and admonition sounded by God's messenger, people were still adamant on polytheism and rejected the messenger. The implication is that the Quraysh and their supporters will now encounter this last phase. If they did not duly value the messenger and remained adamant on their ways, they will definitely face the established practice of God after being given some respite. And this will not be an act of injustice by God. It will be an injustice they meted out to themselves.

59 وَمَا أَوْتِيتُمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ فَمَتَّاعِ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتُهَا ۖ وَمَا عِندَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَىٰ ۖ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾

The previous warnings were indirect. This verse directly addresses the leaders of the Quraysh. They are told that the life of luxury they enjoyed should not make them arrogant. It was only a comfort for a few days and a transient pleasure. The real thing which was better and everlasting is with God. It will be given to those who seek the Hereafter and strive for it. So, they should not waste the treasures of this eternal life by being lured by these temporary means and transient joys. They should use their intellect. Do they not understand this fact (أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ).

60 أَفَمَن وَعَدْنَاهُ وَعْدًا حَسَنًا فَهُوَ لَا فِئَةٍ لَهُۥ كَفَنُ مَتَّعْنَاهُ مَتَّاعِ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ثُمَّ هُوَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ مِنَ الْمُحْضَرِينَ ﴿٦٠﴾

The word *إحضار* means to bring someone tied up as a criminal and for this reason the meaning of bringing forth someone with humiliation is incorporated in the word *مُحْضَرِينَ*.

The implication of the verse is that people should bear in mind that, on the one hand were those with whom God had promised an everlasting kingdom and they were bound to receive it – and hence whose promise can be more truthful than God – and on the other hand were those whom God had blessed with some temporary pleasures of a transient life, but ultimately, on the Day of Judgement they will be dragged with disgrace to the presence of God. So they should speak up whose fate was better and lasting.

Section III: Verses (62-75)

In the succeeding verses, a refutation of polytheism and idols is made. If anyone thought that in the Hereafter, his alleged associates and intercessors would be of benefit to him, he must get rid of this notion. Neither do these associates and intercessors have any role in administering this world, nor will they be of any avail in the Hereafter. Those who were denying the message of the Qur'ān on the basis of these baseless entities should think about their fate carefully.

59. And whatever things you have been given are only resources of this world and its finery. And whatever is with God, is better and lasting also. So, do you not understand?

60. He with whom We have made a goodly promise; thus he will certainly receive what is promised will become like him who We bestowed with worldly resources, then he will be of those who are going to be summoned on the Day of Judgement.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيهِمْ فَيَقُولُ أَيْنَ شُرَكَائِيَ الَّذِينَ كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾ قَالَ الَّذِينَ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ رَبَّنَا هَؤُلَاءِ الَّذِينَ أَغْوَيْنَا أَغْوَيْنَاهُمْ كَمَا غَوَيْنَا تَبَرَّأْنَا إِلَيْكَ مَا كَانُوا إِيَّانَا يَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَقِيلَ ادْعُوا شُرَكَاءَكُمْ فَدَعَوْهُمْ فَلَمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَهُمْ وَرَأَوُا الْعَذَابَ لَوْ أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيهِمْ فَيَقُولُ مَاذَا أَجَبْتُمُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾ فَعِيثَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَنْبَاءُ يَوْمَئِذٍ فَهُمْ لَا يَتَسَاءَلُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾ فَأَمَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَحَسْبَىٰ أَنْ يَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُفْلِحِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾ وَرَبُّكَ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَيَخْتَارُ مَا كَانَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾ وَرَبُّكَ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُكِنُّ صُدُورُهُمْ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾ وَهُوَ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ لَهُ الْخِصْمُ فِي الْأُولَىٰ وَالْآخِرَةِ وَلَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾ قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمُ الَّيْلَ سَمَدًا إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مِنَ اللَّهِ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُمْ بِضِيَآءٍ أَفَلَا تَسْمَعُونَ ﴿٣١﴾ قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمُ النَّهَارَ سَمَدًا إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مِنَ اللَّهِ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُمْ بِدُجَىٰ تَسْكُنُونَ فِيهِ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾ وَمِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ لِتَسْكُنُوا فِيهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيهِمْ فَيَقُولُ أَيْنَ شُرَكَائِيَ الَّذِينَ كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾ وَنَزَعْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا فَقُلْنَا هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ فَعَلِمُوا أَنَّ الْحَقَّ لِلَّهِ وَصَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

And bear in mind the day when God will call out, then ask: “Where are those partners of Mine you have been associating with Me?” Then those on whom the words of God would have been fulfilled will say: “Our Lord! These are the people whom We had led astray. We led them astray the way we ourselves had gone astray. We declare our acquittal from them in Your presence. They have not been worshipping Us.” (62-63)

And they will be asked: “Now, call your associates.” So, they will call out to them, but they will not respond to them and they will face the torment. Would that they had been among those who were guided! (64)

And bear in mind the day when God will call them and ask them: “What answer did you give to the messengers?” So, they will be speechless in dismay and they will not even be able to mutually ask one another. Yes! He who repented and professed faith and did righteous deeds, it is probable that he will succeed. (65-66)

And it is your Lord Who creates whatever He wants and chooses what He wants. They do not have any authority. God is pure and exalted from things which they associate with Him. And your Lord knows what they conceal in their hearts and what they reveal. And He is God. There is no deity except Him. He alone is worthy of gratitude in this world and in the Hereafter too. And judgement is in His Hands and to Him shall you be returned. (68-70)

Tell them: “Speak up, if God makes the night prevail on you forever till the Hereafter, then which deity except God can bring light to you? So, do you not listen?!” Say: “Speak up, if God makes the day prevail on you forever till the Hereafter, then which deity except God can bring the night to you in which you feel comfort? So, do you people not see?!” And out of His mercy has He created the night and day for you so that you may find comfort in it and that you may seek His bounty and that you may be grateful. (71-73)

And bear in mind that day when God will call out to them and say: “Where are My partners you regarded to be My associates.” And We will pick out one witness from each community and tell people: “Bring forth your evidence.” So, it will become evident to them that with God lies the

truth. And whatever they had been falsely alleging will all disappear. (74-75)

Explanation

61 ﴿وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيهِمْ فَيَقُولُ أَيْنَ شُرَكَائِيَ الَّذِينَ كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ﴾

This verse and the subsequent ones are of the nature of successive warnings. They depict the fate of the polytheists, leaders who led people to polytheism and the entities who were regarded as deities. It states that people must not forget the day on which God will summon all the polytheists to His court of justice and ask them about the partners they associated with Him. The wrath concealed in *أَيْنَ شُرَكَائِيَ*, not only for the polytheists but also the idols they worshipped can well be appreciated by those who have a flare for the language. The implication is that they should bring forth all of them so that they and their deities both can see their fate.

62 ﴿قَالَ الَّذِينَ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ رَبَّنَا هَؤُلَاءِ الَّذِينَ أَغْوَيْنَا أَغْوَيْنَهُمْ كَمَا غَوَيْنَا تَبَرَّأْنَا إِلَيْكَ مَا كَانُوا إِيَّانَا يَعْبُدُونَ﴾

The words *قَالَ الَّذِينَ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ* refer to those leaders of the polytheists about whom the verdict of God's decisive punishment would have been passed. It is stated in this verse that as a last excuse, those who were led astray will point to their leaders before God as the ones who were responsible for they being led astray. They will say that, had these leaders not lured them, they would not have been misguided. The words *أَغْوَيْنَهُمْ كَمَا غَوَيْنَا* will be immediately uttered by their leaders that they made these people into what they themselves were; it is these followers who must be blamed for following them. They will address God further and say: *تَبَرَّأْنَا إِلَيْكَ* i.e. in your presence, we acquit ourselves for their deeds and will go on to say: *مَا كَانُوا إِيَّانَا يَعْبُدُونَ* i.e. they have not been worshipping us that we should be responsible for it; they have been following us out of their own will and choice. There are several instances in the Qur'ān where this argument between misguided leaders and their followers has been cited. Here is an example:

﴿قَالَ ادْخُلُوا فِي أُمَمٍ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْدِكُمْ مِنَ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسِ فِي النَّارِ كُلَّمَا دَخَلَتْ أُمَّةٌ لَعَنَتْ أُخْتَهَا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا دَارَكُوا فِيهَا جَمِيعًا قَالَتْ أُخْرَاهُمْ لِأُولِهِمْ رَبَّنَا هَؤُلَاءِ أَضَلُّونَا فَاتِهِمْ عَذَابًا ضِعْفًا مِنَ النَّارِ قَالَ لِكُلِّ ضِعْفٍ وَلَكِنْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ وَقَالَتْ أُولَهُمْ لِأُخْرَاهُمْ فَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا مِنْ فَضْلٍ فذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْسِبُونَ﴾ (38-39)

God will order: "Enter Hell with those groups from among the jinn and men who entered before you." Whenever a group will enter, it will curse its counterpart until when all are gathered, the later ones will say about the earlier ones: "Our Lord! These are the people who led us astray. Inflict double punishment on them." God will say: "For each of you is double punishment but you do not know." And the earlier ones will say to the later ones: "You also have no superiority on us. So, taste punishment because of your deeds." (7:38-39)

61. And bear in mind the day when God will call out, then ask: "Where are those partners of Mine you have been associating with Me?"

62. Then those on whom the words of God would have been fulfilled will say: "Our Lord! These are the people whom We had led astray. We led them astray the way we ourselves had gone astray. We declare our acquittal from them in Your presence. They have not been worshipping Us."

وَقِيلَ ادْعُوا شُرَكَاءَكُمْ فَدَعَوْهُمُ فَلَمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَهُمْ وَرَأَوُا الْعَذَابَ لَوْ أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾

The followers will try to put the blame on their leaders. When the latter will openly declare their acquittal from them, they will be told that their leaders have disowned them. So they should bring forth their deities they worshipped. At that time, in great worry they will call out these deities like Lāt, Manāt, ‘Uzzā and Nā’ilah, but they will not get any response to their calls because these deities never, in fact, existed. They existed only in imagination. These people will come to know in the Hereafter that they had only worshipped conjecture. It may be kept in mind that here the idolaters of Arabia are mentioned – all of whose idols and deities were self-styled and imaginary. Nations that have worshipped actual beings – like the Christians who worship Jesus (sws) – are mentioned separately by the Qur’ān. About them it is said that on the Day of Judgement, Jesus (sws) will disown those who worshipped him and say that he was never aware that some foolish people worshipped him and that he had actually asked everyone to worship the One God.

The words *وَرَأَوُا الْعَذَابَ* allude to the fact that calling out to idols on which they had pinned their hopes will prove futile. However, the torment of God will be before them and they will face it.

The words *لَوْ أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَهْتَدُونَ* express sorrow at their state of affairs: would that they had received guidance and not faced this torment. The profundity and horrible nature of the torment becomes evident from this.

وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيهِمْ فَيَقُولُ مَاذَا أَجَبْتُمُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾ فَعَبِيثٌ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَنْبَاءُ يَوْمَئِذٍ فَهُمْ لَا يَتَسَاءَلُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾

These verses also portray the Day of Judgement. On that Day, every community will be called out and asked how they responded to their respective messenger. Obviously, this question would be posed to them to make evident to them the grave nature of their crime: God had made arrangements to guide them by sending His messengers so that the truth becomes evident to them from every aspect. So, they should now speak up and reply how much importance they had given to these arrangements made by God.

The expression *فَعَبِيثٌ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَنْبَاءُ* means that at that time everyone will be so mystified and completely at a loss that they will have nothing substantive to say.

The words *فَهُمْ لَا يَتَسَاءَلُونَ* say that they will be so perplexed that they will not even be able to question one another to find an answer to the query posed to them. In such circumstances, it is the leaders who are the hope for all. However, their situation has already been described earlier: that they would be too involved in themselves and would not be in a position to think of others. This aspect is also discussed in verse 109 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah.

فَأَمَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَعَلَىٰ أَنْ يَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُفْلِحِينَ ﴿٦٥﴾

When the word *عَلَىٰ* is used with reference to God, the meanings of promise and glad tidings are

63. And they will be asked: “Now, call your associates.” So, they will call out to them, but they will not respond to them and they will face the torment. Would that they had been among those who were guided!

64. And bear in mind the day when God will call them and ask them: “What answer did you give to the messengers?” So, they will be speechless in dismay and they will not even be able to mutually ask one another.

65. Yes! He who repented and professed faith and did righteous deeds, it is probable that he will succeed.

incorporated in it, as is explained at an appropriate place in this exegesis.

After explaining the fate of those who lived and died as polytheists, this verse gives glad tidings to those who, after giving up the evil creeds of polytheism and intercession, adopt a life of faith and righteous deeds. It is stated that it can be hoped that these people will succeed. They should not be totally convinced that they shall succeed as success will purely be because of God's grace, but they have the right to hope since God is Gracious and Merciful.

66 ﴿وَرَبُّكَ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَيَخْتَارُ ۚ مَا كَانَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ ۚ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ﴾

In this verse, the words *مَا يَشَاءُ* are suppressed after *وَيَخْتَارُ* due to the obvious concomitant indication. This is a reference to the angels: it is God Who has created them as well and it is He Who has made them His near ones. He creates whatever He desires. In Sūrah al-Ḥajj, the words used are: (٧٥:٢٢) *اللَّهُ يَصْطَفِي مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ رُسُلًا وَمِنَ النَّاسِ* (God selects his messengers from angels and from people also, (22:75)). In other words, the superiority held by the angels because of their physical form or because of being close to God is something which God has granted them. These traits do not make them worthy of being ascribed divinity. The words *مَا كَانَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ* say that they do not have any authority independent of God. It is further said that God is beyond and exalted above all such ascriptions (*سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ*). If someone is made His associate in His authority and His attributes, then this will be akin to negating all His higher attributes. Here, it may be kept in mind that earlier in verse 64, according to the view of the idolaters of Arabia, all the deities mentioned belonged to the genre of angels. For this reason, the Qur'ān has clarified the real status of the angels: they may be a superior creation of God, but this superiority is God-given and not self-acquired.

67 ﴿وَرَبُّكَ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُكِنُّ صُدُورُهُمْ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ﴾

This verse refutes polytheism on the basis of God's profound wisdom: when the Prophet's Lord has full knowledge of their inner and outer selves, why would He need anyone to be His partner. This could have been a need had He been dependent on others to become aware of the circumstances of people. Also, any intercession to Him could have been a need only when someone else was in a position of adding to His knowledge because, God forbid, His knowledge is incomplete. When any such preposition cannot even be supposed, then what is the meaning of worshipping the angels because they are thought to be a means of procuring the nearness of God for others?

68 ﴿وَهُوَ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۚ لَهُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فِي الْأُولَىٰ وَالْآخِرَةِ ۚ وَلَهُ الْحُكْمُ ۚ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ﴾

This verse sums up the previous discussion: He alone is the real God. There is no deity besides Him. All those who are regarded as deities are baseless. It may be kept in mind that the Arabs regarded God to be the supreme deity but at the same time ascribed partners to Him. This verse

66. And it is your Lord Who creates whatever He wants and chooses what He wants. They do not have any authority. God is pure and exalted from things which they associate with Him.

67. And your Lord knows what they conceal in their hearts and what they reveal. And He is God.

68. There is no deity except Him. He alone is worthy of gratitude in this world and in the Hereafter too. And judgement is in His Hands and to Him shall you be returned.

refutes this supposition.

The words **لَهُ الْخُذُ فِي الْأُولَى وَالْآخِرَةِ** say that the favours which people enjoy in this world are from God and in the Hereafter too, the favours they will be blessed with will be from God. For this reason, in this world also, it is God alone who is worthy of gratitude and in the Hereafter too. No one else will have any share in it. The words of praise which will be on the tongues of the People of Paradise once they are blessed with God's favours are referred to in Sūrah Yūnus.

The words **وَلَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ** imply that only the Almighty will have the authority of deciding the affairs of each and every person and everyone will come to Him and none else.

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمُ اللَّيْلَ سَمَـمًا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مَنْ إِلَهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُمْ بِضِيَاءٍ ۖ أَفَلَا تَسْمَعُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾ قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمُ النَّهَارَ سَمَـمًا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مَنْ إِلَهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُمْ بِلَيْلٍ تَسْكُنُونَ فِيهِ ۖ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾

The word **قُلْ** here implies asking a question. When the question is of an obvious nature and there is no possibility for the addressees to differ in its answer, then this word becomes very apt with respect to conclusive communication of the truth. The idolaters of Arabia acknowledged that it is God alone Who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. Based on this affirmation of theirs, they are asked that if God makes the night prevail on them forever, is there anyone from their deities who can make light appear? Similarly, if God makes the day prevail over them forever, do their deities have the power to bring forth the night in which these people attain comfort from the tiredness of the day? The implication is that, when, their deities have no say in these elements of nature on which the life of the creatures of this universe depends, then what good are they for which they are regarded to be God's partners?

Here, this style of the Qur'ān must be borne in mind that after the mention of the night the words used are **أَفَلَا تَسْمَعُونَ** (do you people not hear?) and after the mention of the day the words used are **أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ** (do you people not see?). This style portrays the actual situation. It is as if the first question is being uttered in the night, implying that if they are not able to see, can't they not even hear? So, why do they not hear. Similarly, it is as if the second question is posed in the day: at this time, every thing is fully lit up and can they not see obvious facts in such light?

Another aspect of eloquence here is that what can be deduced has been made experiential. This means that such is the nature of these self-evident facts that not much contemplation is needed. It is sufficient that a person has ears and eyes. But such is their situation that, neither can they hear anything in the stillness of the night, nor can they see anything in the light of the day.

Another thing worthy of attention in these verses is that the attribute of **تَسْكُنُونَ فِيهِ** is mentioned with night but no attribute is mentioned with the day. The reason for this has been pointed out many times before in this exegesis: parallel clauses in the discourse are suppressed because of eloquence and brevity when they are understood to be present. Here, since the benefit of the day was absolutely evident, its mention was suppressed. In the succeeding verse, this suppression has been made evident.

69. Tell them: "Speak up, if God makes the night prevail on you forever till the Hereafter, then which deity except God can bring light to you? So, do you not listen?!" Say: "Speak up, if God makes the day prevail on you forever till the Hereafter, then which deity except God can bring the night to you in which you feel comfort? So, do you people not see!?"

وَمِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ لِتَسْكُنُوا فِيهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾

This verse states that bringing the night and day is only because of God's grace and blessing. No one else has any authority in this regard. Furthermore, the Almighty owed no obligation to people to make the night a means of comfort for them and then make the day appear so that they are able to strive to obtain their sustenance in it. All this is nothing but a manifestation of God's mercy so that people are able to benefit from these blessings and remain thankful to God for making such an elaborate arrangement. The word يَسْكُنُوا (that you seek comfort) is related to night and the words وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ (so that you seek His bounty) to the day. The effort people make to earn their living is termed as "seeking God's bounty." This is because people's efforts, while using the means and resources created by God, should be in accordance with His wish. If a person does not do so, it is as if he uses the weapons God has given him against God Himself and in this way he invites His wrath.

وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيهِمْ فَيَقُولُ أَيْنَ شُرَكَائِيَ الَّذِينَ كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ ﴿٧١﴾ وَنَزَعْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا فَقُلْنَا هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ فَعَلِمُوا أَنَّ الْحَقَّ لِلَّهِ وَصَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾

Verse 74 also occurs at the beginning of this section of verses. Here it has come as a prelude to another issue: the Almighty, in order to conclusively and finally communicate the truth to the idolaters on the Day of Judgement, will make messengers of each nation testify that they had taught them the belief of monotheism and not polytheism. After this testimony of the messengers, the Almighty will ask their respective nations as to on whose approval did they associate partners with God; if they have any proof of this, they should present it. At that time, it will become evident to everyone that God was on the truth and all their self-styled deities will prove to be of no worth.

The word شَهِيدٌ refers to God's messengers who were sent to each nation. They are called by this word because they bore witness to God's religion before their respective nations, not only in this world, but in the Hereafter also they will testify that they faithfully delivered the religion of God. If the later generations incorporated religious innovations in it, it was the latter's responsibility and that they themselves are absolved of this. It needs to be kept in mind that in support of their polytheism and innovations every *ummah* gives reference to its prophets and messengers: that these beliefs are based on their teachings and that they are only following these teachings. The Almighty will conclusively deliver the truth to them through the evidence of these very messengers after which their followers will have nothing to say. This testimony of the messengers is mentioned in verses 16-17 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah. Readers may look it up for details.

My mentor, Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī, interprets this verse in the light of verse 69 of Sūrah Maryam and verse 47 of Sūrah Hām Mīm al-Sajdah. However, I am not convinced of his interpretation. My own interpretation is the same as that of the other exegetes and clear parallel

70. And out of His mercy has He created the night and day for you so that you may find comfort in it and that you may seek His bounty and that you may be grateful.

71. And bear in mind that day when God will call out to them and say: "Where are My partners you regarded to be My associates?" And We will pick out one witness from each community and tell people: "Bring forth your evidence." So, it will become evident to them that with God lies the truth. And whatever they had been falsely alleging will all disappear.

verses of the Qur'ān also support it. God knows best.

Section IV: Verses (76-84)

The succeeding topic is connected to verse 61. It had been mentioned earlier that many nations of the past which showed arrogance at their wealth and riches were destroyed by God and their deities who they were proud of could not save them. After this, the topic of polytheism was brought up in a secondary way that ended on verse 75. Next, the initial topic is taken up once again and, by presenting the haughtiness and subsequent exemplary fate of Qārūn, a Jewish capitalist, admonition is sounded to people who were lured by the riches of this world and had forgotten God and the Hereafter. In the nation of the Prophet Muḥammad (sws), Abū Lahab had the same status as Qārūn. He, too, was very proud of his wealth and his wealth had become a trial not only for himself, but also for others. The purpose of citing this example was to open the eyes of such people.

Readers may now proceed to study the verses.

Text and Translation

إِنَّ قَارُونَ كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمِ مُوسَى فَبَغَى عَلَيْهِمْ ۖ وَآتَيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْكُنُوزِ مَا إِنَّ مَفَاتِحَهُ لَتَنُوءُ بِالْعُصْبَةِ أُولِ الْقُوَّةِ ۚ إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ قَوْمُهُ لَا تَفْرَحْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفَرِحِينَ ﴿٧٦﴾ وَابْتَغِ فِيمَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ وَلَا تَنْسَ نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَأَحْسِنْ كَمَا أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ وَلَا تَبْغِ الْفُسَادَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُبْغِضِينَ ﴿٧٧﴾ قَالَ إِنَّمَا أُوتِيتُهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ عِنْدِي ۗ أَوَلَمْ يَعْلَم أَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ أَهْلَكَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ مَنْ هُوَ أَشَدُّ قُوَّةً وَأَكْثَرُ جَبَعًا ۗ وَلَا يُسْئَلُ عَنْ دُونِهِمُ الْمُبْغِضُونَ ﴿٧٨﴾ فَخَرَجَ عَلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ فِي زِينَتِهِ ۚ قَالَ الَّذِينَ يُرِيدُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا لِيَلْكِتَ لَنَا مِثْلَ مَا أُوتِيَ قَارُونُ ۚ إِنَّهُ لَكَدُحْظٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٧٩﴾ وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ وَيْلَكُمْ ثَوَابُ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لِمَنْ آمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا وَلَا يُلْقَاهَا إِلَّا الصَّابِرُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾ فَخَسَفْنَا بِهِ وَبَدَارِهِ الْأَرْضَ ۚ فَمَا كَانَ لَهُ مِنْ فِئَةٍ يَنْصُرُوهُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ ۚ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُنتَصِرِينَ ﴿٨١﴾ وَاصْبِرْ لِّلَّذِينَ تَمْنُو أَمْكَانَهُ بِالْأَمْسِ يَقُولُونَ ۚ وَيَوْمَ كَانَ اللَّهُ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَقْدِرُ ۚ لَوْلَا أَن مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا لَخَسَفَ بِنَا ۚ وَيَكَانَهُ لَا يُفْدِحُ الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾ تِلْكَ الدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ ۚ نَجْعَلُهَا لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُرِيدُونَ عُلُوًّا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فَسَادًا ۚ وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾ مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّهَا ۚ وَمَنْ جَاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا يُجْزَى الَّذِينَ عَمِلُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ إِلَّا مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾

Qārūn belonged to the nation of Moses. So, he showed tyranny against them. And We had given him so much treasures that its keys could barely be lifted by a strong group. When the people of His nation said to him: “Do not be arrogant. God does not like those who are arrogant. And whatever God has given you, seek the Hereafter in it and do not forget your share from the world. And the way God has been kind to you, you also be kind to others. And do not seek disorder in the land. God does not like those who want disorder.” (76-77)

He replied: “Whatever I have is because of the knowledge I possess.” Did he not know that God destroyed many nations before him which were mightier than him in power and also greater in number and the criminals are not even asked for their crimes? (78)

Thus he came out with full splendour and majesty before the people of his nation. So, those who were after the life of the world, said: “Would that we, too, had what Qārūn has. Indeed, he is

very fortunate.” And those who were endowed with knowledge said: “O Wretched Ones! God’s reward for those who have faith and do righteous deeds is far better,” and this wisdom is given only to the patient. (79-80)

We made him sink in the earth with his dwelling. So, neither could a group come to his rescue against God, nor could he defend his own self. And those who yesterday desired his position declared: “Indeed! God gives abundantly to those among His servants He wills and sparingly to those He wills. Had God not been gracious to us, He would have thrust us in the earth as well. Undoubtedly, the disbelievers will never succeed.” (81-82)

We shall reserve this abode of the Hereafter for only those who are not desirous of arrogance and disorder in the land and the ultimate success is for the God-fearing. He who earns a virtuous deed, for him is a better reward than it and he who earns an evil deed, then for such evil doers the recompense is equal to what they did. (83-84)

Explanation

إِنَّ قَارُونَ كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمِ مُوسَى فَبَغَى عَلَيْهِمْ ۖ وَآتَيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْكُنُوزِ مَا إِنَّ مَفَاتِحَهُ لَتَنُوءُ بِالْعُصْبَةِ أُولَى الْقُوَّةِ إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ قَوْمُهُ لَا تَفْرَحْ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفَرِحِينَ ﴿٧٢﴾

Qārūn has been mentioned in the Torah in chapter 19 of the Book of Numbers. He is called Korah in the Torah. It is evident from his genealogy that he belonged to the Levites – the tribe to which Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws) belonged and was the son of his father’s brother. He was very jealous of the political and religious leadership of Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws). Hence, he raised the slogan that if all members of a tribe were equally holy and religious, then what was so superior about Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws) that they had become the leaders of the tribe and did others not have this right. So, he connived with some people of the family and rose in rebellion against Moses (sws). The Torah records:

Korah son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and certain Reubenites—Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, and one son of Peleth—became insolent and rose up against Moses. With them were 250 Israelite men, well-known community leaders who had been appointed members of the council. They came as a group to oppose Moses and Aaron and said to them, “You have gone too far! The whole community is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is with them. Why then do you set yourselves above the LORD’s assembly?” (Numbers, 19:1-3)

It is this rebellion of his which the Qur’ān has referred to here by the words فَبَغَى عَلَيْهِمْ.

The words وَآتَيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْكُنُوزِ مَا إِنَّ مَفَاتِحَهُ لَتَنُوءُ بِالْعُصْبَةِ أُولَى الْقُوَّةِ refer to his state of affluence. They actually point to the reason that made him rebellious and arrogant: since he was a very rich person, he disliked accepting the superiority of Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws) over his family and nation. These words imply that God had given him such treasure of wealth that the keys of the place they were locked up in would be lifted by a group of powerful men. This is not a statement of exaggeration; it is a factual one. In those times, today’s strong rooms, vaults and safes did not

72. Qārūn belonged to the nation of Moses. So, he showed tyranny against them. And We had given him so much treasures that its keys could barely be lifted by a strong group. When the people of His nation said to him: “Do not be arrogant. God does not like those who are arrogant.”

exist, nor were propitious keys and locks and bolts in vogue the way they are today. In those times, people would burry their treasures in the ground and in order to protect them they would be placed in locations having huge iron doors. They would then be bolted with help of heavy iron rods that would be latched across the bars and which would be prepared for this very purpose. Latching and un-latching these rods with all their accessories would become a very heavy task. A group of powerful men would be needed to lift or bolt the latch. A very similar way is adopted today for bolting castles and city walls. Such old monuments still exist in our rural areas. The verse actually refers to such keys. Just as heavy cauldrons of food signify generosity, the existence of such keys is a sign of wealth.

The words **إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ قَوْمُهُ لَا تَفْرَحْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفَرِحِينَ** imply that when Korah adopted this attitude of rebelliousness, the wise among his nation tried to persuade him that he should not show arrogance before the God Who has actually granted him this wealth and affluence and that he should remember that God does not like such haughty people. This was a polite admonition that was meant to tell him that people who adopt this behaviour are seized by the Almighty. Though the word **قوم** occurs as a common noun, concomitant indications show that it refers to learned men of the nation. Verse 80 has explained this. The reason that this general word is used is that the majority of the nation was with Moses (sws). There were a few who, because of their vested interests, had formed a group with Korah.

وَابْتَغِ فِيمَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ وَلَا تَنْسَ نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَأَحْسِنْ كَمَا أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ وَلَا تَبْغِ الْفُسَادَ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ⁷³

This is a further description of the advice that the learned men of the nation gave to Korah. Each and every sentence of it is a treasure of wisdom and sagacity.

The words **وَابْتَغِ فِيمَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ** imply that if God had blessed them with wealth and affluence, then it was not meant to make them arrogant and haughty but to make this wealth a means of attaining success in the Hereafter. The implication is that whatever riches they had were neither the legacy of their forefathers, nor the consequence of their own abilities. They were purely a blessing from God and by making them wealthy the Almighty had put them through a trial. Their test was whether they become slaves to it or made it a means of earning God's pleasure.

The words **وَلَا تَنْسَ نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا** are a sagacious admonition: they should remember that everything of this world is mortal. Nothing is eternal here. Only that will benefit them in their everlasting lives which today they spend for God's cause. If they shut their eyes to the rights of God and His creatures and become slaves to their wealth, they should remember that this will only hand them over to their ruin.

Our exegetes have generally interpreted these words to mean that they should not ignore their share in this world; it is not said that they should forsake this world for the Hereafter, but that they should not become oblivious of the Hereafter. In my opinion, this interpretation is totally incorrect and incorrect on the basis of many reasons. However, after explaining their true

73. And whatever God has given you, seek the Hereafter in it and do not forget your share from the world. And the way God has been kind to you, you also be kind to others. And do not seek disorder in the land. God does not like those who want disorder."

meaning, no need remains to refute this interpretation.

The words **وَأَحْسِنَ كَمَا أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ** imply that just as God has been gracious to them, they, too, should be gracious to others. God wants to see the reflection of His attributes in His creatures: they should bear in mind that the God Who is munificent with His people does not like people who are miserly with others.

The words **وَلَا تَبْغِ الْفَسَادَ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ** explain the above sagacious advice from its negative aspect. The expression **فَسَادٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ** (disorder in the land) has been explained at many instances in this exegesis. It does not merely connote theft and robbery, for these are only some of its external manifestations. The real disorder is arrogance and haughtiness. Arrogance means that a person exceeds the limits of his worship and intervenes in the rights and limits of God. Those who perpetrate this crime are guilty of spreading disorder in the land, however subtle they may be in this regard. God does not like such people. Obviously, how can He like such people who show tyranny before Him and violate the sanctity of what is regarded sacred by Him? And when He does not like them, then this clearly means that their status is that of unwanted weeds in His orchard and of self-invited guests in His banquet. Ultimately, a time will come when these weeds shall be uprooted and these undesirable people shall be dislodged from their places.

قَالَ إِنَّمَا أُوتِيتُهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ عِنْدِي ۖ أَوَلَمْ يَعْلَم أَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ أَهْلَكَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ مَنْ هُوَ أَشَدُّ مِنْهُ قُوَّةً وَآكَثَرُ جَعًا وَلَا يُسْأَلُ عَنْ ذُنُوبِهِمُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾

Qārūn replied that the wealth and riches he had were the result of his own efficient planning and the consequence of his own acumen; it did not have any link with God so he did not owe Him an obligation. The word **عِنْدِي** portrays Qārūn's mindset: the source of wealth was found within himself and not in God. It is for this reason he contended that he did not fear God or anyone one else. In other words, he implied that all this advice that he was receiving had no importance to him and it better be given to someone else.

The words **أَوَلَمْ يَعْلَمَنَّ أَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ أَهْلَكَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ مَنْ هُوَ أَشَدُّ مِنْهُ قُوَّةً وَآكَثَرُ جَعًا** form a comment by God on Qārūn's reply: before making these bragging remarks, this wretched person did not think that many persons of the past were mightier than him, but God had destroyed them in the blink of an eye. It may be kept in mind that not very long before him, the Pharaoh had been drowned. So, even if he was not a witness to this incident, he must well have heard about it. The words **أَشَدُّ مِنْهُ قُوَّةً** here refer to the might of people viz a viz means and resources, majesty and grandeur, weapons and instruments and the word **جَعًا** in **آكَثَرُ جَعًا** refers to the number of people in a family or tribe.

The words **وَلَا يُسْأَلُ عَنْ ذُنُوبِهِمُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ** imply that when God decides to seize such criminals, then they are not given even this much respite that they be asked about their crime and about any pretext they may be having. In fact, God's torment seizes them immediately. On the Day of Judgement too, God will not need to investigate any wrongdoer. The forehead, hands, feet and his other limbs will bear witness against him. The words used in Sūrah al-Raḥmān are: **يُعْرِفُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ بَسْمِهِمْ** (٤١:٥٥) **فَيُخَذُّ بِالْأَوَامِرِ وَالْأَقْدَامِ** (the wrongdoers will be recognised by their signs; thus they shall be

74. He replied: "Whatever I have is because of the knowledge I possess." Did he not know that God destroyed many nations before him which were mightier than him in power and also greater in number and the criminals are not even asked for their crimes.

seized by their forelocks and their feet, (55:41)).

فَخَرَجَ عَلَى قَوْمِهِ فِي زِينَتِهِ ۖ قَالَ الَّذِينَ يُرِيدُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا لِيَلْزِمُنَّكَ مَلَكٌ مِمَّا قَارُونَ ۚ إِنَّهُ لَذُو حَظٍّ عَظِيمٍ ﴿٧٥﴾

It seems that during these events, Qārūn took out a procession to show off his strength and power in order to over-awe Moses (sws) and his companions and to increase his own power. It is evident from the words فِي زِينَتِهِ that, at this instance, he specially made a show of his majesty and grandeur because it is such a display that impresses the common man the most. This precisely is the same ploy which the leaders of our society employ every now and then in our cities and villages. The effect of this on people who regard the wealth of this world to be everything was that they cried out that Qārūn was a very lucky person.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ وَيَكُنْ ثَوَابُ اللَّهِ خَيْرَ لِمَنَ آمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا وَلَا يُفْتَنُ إِلَّا الصَّابِرُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾

Men of knowledge and wisdom in the nation tried to convince these people that the real thing to which they should devote themselves was not a display of wealth but faith and righteous deeds and their reward. However, not everyone can acquire this wisdom. Only those people receive it who have the strength and perseverance to adhere to faith and righteous deeds instead of losing themselves to the lures of this world.

The expression أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ refers to real knowledge or the knowledge of God's comprehension and of the Hereafter. It is this knowledge from which people obtain real light. If a person does not have this knowledge, then he is in the dark, even if he is competent in other disciplines. Qārūn was very adept in the discipline of finance and it is evident that he also claimed to be so. However, he was deprived of real knowledge. For this reason, in spite of being very wealthy, he was just like a snake that greedily guarded his treasures. Precisely, same is the case with other disciplines of knowledge. They too become beneficial for people if they have the radiance of real knowledge with them. If they do not have this knowledge with them, they can become very clever, crafty and cunning, but can never become human beings. Without being a human being, such cleverness and craftiness is very dangerous. It is like a sword in the hands of a naïve person. It may be kept in mind that as far as pure guile and astuteness are concerned, Satan is not second to anyone. In fact, he is the leader of all clever people.

The antecedent of the pronoun in وَلَا يُفْتَنُ إِلَّا الصَّابِرُونَ is the wisdom and sagacity which these people of knowledge urged them to adopt. It is very common in Arabic for an antecedent to occur in this way, and many examples of this usage can be seen in previous pages of this exegesis. One thing which is evident from this sentence is that real knowledge and patience are pairs. The second thing which is apparent from this is that true wisdom is acquired only by those who have patience. In other words, they are people who have the strength in them to sacrifice the greatest of their assets and riches for the Hereafter. Those who do not have this capacity and strength cannot acquire this wisdom.

A question that arises on this sentence is: is it uttered by the men of learning mentioned in the

75. Thus he came out with full splendour and majesty before the people of his nation. So, those who were after the life of the world, they said: "Would that we too had what Qārūn has. Indeed, he is very fortunate."

76. And those who were endowed with knowledge said: "O Wretched Ones! God's reward for those who have faith and do righteous deeds is far better," and this wisdom is given only to the patient.

verse or is it an insertion by God and thereby forms a sentence of praise for these men of learning? It is difficult for me to say anything with certainty about this but my mind does go to the second of these options and there are parallel verses of the Qur'ān as well to this effect. In this case, this sentence would mean that this wisdom was given to these people because they were patient. They were not ones who were to be lured by the show and pomp of Qārūn's wealth and majesty.

77 ﴿فَخَسَفْنَا بِهِ وَبِدَارِهِ الْأَرْضَ ۖ فَمَا كَانَ لَهُ مِنْ فِئَةٍ يَنْصُرُوهُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ ۚ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُنتَصِرِينَ﴾

Here, a part of Qārūn's account is suppressed. When Moses (sws) saw that after the mischief worked by Samarī, his nation was faced with a new trial, he invited Qārūn and his companions to a *mubāhalah* (cursing and ill-praying) in front of the worship tent so that it becomes evident who is more near and pleasing to God. The Torah has given a lengthy description of this event. I am citing its relevant parts:

So they moved away from the tents of Korah, Dathan and Abiram. Dathan and Abiram had come out and were standing with their wives, children and little ones at the entrances to their tents. Then Moses said, "This is how you will know that the LORD has sent me to do all these things and that it was not my idea: If these men die a natural death and suffer the fate of all mankind, then the LORD has not sent me. But if the LORD brings about something totally new, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them, with everything that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the realm of the dead, then you will know that these men have treated the LORD with contempt." As soon as he finished saying all this, the ground under them split apart and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them and their households, and all those associated with Korah, together with their possessions. They went down alive into the realm of the dead, with everything they owned; the earth closed over them, and they perished and were gone from the community. At their cries, all the Israelites around them fled, shouting, "The earth is going to swallow us too!" (Numbers, 16:27-34)

It is evident from this that Qārūn and his companions were submerged in the earth as a result of the curse and prayer of Moses and this event took place in a manner that neither could Qārūn defend himself, nor was he saved by his people on the strength of whom he wanted to face Moses (sws).

وَأَصْبَحَ الَّذِينَ تَمَنَّوْا مَكَانَهُ بِالْأَمْسِ يَقُولُونَ وَيْكَأَنَّ اللَّهَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَقْدِرُ ۚ لَوْلَا أَنْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا لَخَسَفَ بِنَا وَيُكَفِّرُ الْكَافِرُونَ ۚ

When people having raw minds see someone affluent or powerful, they are overcome with envy. They think that this power and authority are abiding. However much they may be convinced that these things are temporary and transient, they are not able to grasp this. It is when such people are stripped off their affluence and power do these raw-minded people realise that the advice they had received was true and that God has authority over blessing people with

77. We made him sink in the earth with his dwelling. So, neither did a group could come to his rescue against God nor could he defend his own self.

78. And those who yesterday desired his position declared: "Indeed! God gives abundantly to those among His servants He wills and sparingly to those He wills. Had God not been gracious to us, He would have thrust us in the earth as well. Undoubtedly, the disbelievers will never succeed."

sustenance. He gives sparingly to whomsoever He wants and abundantly also to whomsoever He wants. Similar is what happened to those who became lured by Qārūn's pomp and ostentation. When they witnessed his fate, they cried out that it was a great favour of God that they did not become his companions, otherwise they, too, would have met a similar fate and that those who said that disbelievers never succeed were correct in their contention.

In classical Arabic, the word **أَمْسَ** does not merely mean "yesterday." It also refers to the recent past. This is very similar to its usage in some other languages. The implication is that those who yesterday were infatuated by Qārūn's splendour said these words.

The word **وَيَئ** in **وَيَئُكَ** is a word of admonition. Just as we may say: "goodness me" in English, in a similar way the word **وَيَئ** occurs in Arabic. When the word **كَأَنَّ** or **كَأَنَّكَ** is added to it, the meaning will be to the affect: "goodness me, this is the same things as ..."

The words **بِمَنْ يَشَاءُ** after **يَقْدِرُ** are suppressed on the principle of parallelism. The translation reveals this suppression.

It was referred to earlier that this anecdote of Qārūn was not cited as a past happening. The purpose was to depict in a subtle way the character and fate of Abū Lahab and his companions. The trial with which Moses' (sws) nation was afflicted with in the form of Qārūn was precisely the same as the one Muḥammad's (sws) was afflicted with in the form of Abū Lahab. Though this is not the opportune instance to give details of this similarity, I will allude to some of its aspects so that the real wisdom behind this anecdote is highlighted.

1. Just as Qārūn was the richest person of the Levites, the tribe of Moses (sws), similarly, Abū Lahab was the most affluent person of the Hashimites, the tribe of Muḥammad (sws). There also exists similarity as far as the relation between the two is concerned. Abū Lahab was Muḥammad's (sws) paternal uncle, while Qārūn was the son of Moses' (sws) paternal uncle.

2. Both were very big capitalists. The affluence of Qārūn has already been mentioned earlier. The riches possessed by Abū Lahab will *insha'Allāh* be referred to in Sūrah al-Humazah and Sūrah al-Lahab. Abū Lahab held the keys of the House of God and was the sole custodian of the treasury of the House of God. In this way, he had collected a lot of riches by hook or by crook.

3. Both were very stingy, arrogant and hard-hearted.

4. Both had the same malice for their respective messengers. Qārūn wanted that he have the religious leadership of the tribe so that no one would be able to dent his capitalistic plans. Abū Lahab also wanted that the keys of the House of God and its public treasury remain in his control and no one would deprive him of these.

5. There exists great similarity in the fate of both as well. Both were seized by God's wrath. The fate Qārūn met has been referred to above. The fate of Abū Lahab will *insha'Allāh* be described in Sūrah al-Lahab.

It is evident that here, it is the character of Abū Lahab and his die-hard followers that is actually mentioned in the garb of Qārūn. Unless this aspect of the incidents mentioned in the Qur'ān is kept in mind, their true wisdom cannot be appreciated.

79 ﴿تِلْكَ الدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ نَجْعَلُهَا لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُرِيدُونَ عُلُوًّا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فَسَادًا وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ﴾

This verse sums up the whole advice mentioned previously. It is said that the abode of the

79. We shall reserve this abode of the Hereafter for only those who are not desirous of arrogance and disorder in the land and the ultimate success is for the God-fearing.

Hereafter is reserved by the Almighty for those who will not show arrogance in this world and not spread disorder in it. On the contrary, they will be ones who will lead their lives in this world as true servants of the Almighty and will be the advocates of the system of justice and fairness prescribed by God in the society they live in. It is such people who are pious and real success in the Hereafter is for them. The word نَجَّلُهَا here means “to reserve someone especially for something,” and it is evident from the purport of the verse that the real pious are those whose hearts are devoid of arrogance and who do not spread disorder in the land.

80 مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ خَيْرٌ مِّنْهَا وَمَنْ جَاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا يُجْزَى الَّذِينَ عَمِلُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ إِلَّا مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾

Stated in this verse is the principle according to which the Almighty will deal with the righteous and the wrongdoers in the Hereafter. It is stated that those who will come with the provision of virtue with them will be dealt with by the Almighty according to His graciousness: He will reward them much more than they deserve. As for those who have come with bad deeds, the Almighty will deal with them according to His justice. The consequence of whatever they have done will be placed before them: this is the crop they had sown; now they must taste it.

Section V: Verses (85-88)

Coming up are the closing verses of the *sūrah*. The Prophet (sws) has been assured that he has not asked the Almighty to reveal the Qur'ān to him that he should fret over it. The God Who has revealed it to him will help him in discharging his responsibilities to this Book. God will make him reach his destination successfully. He should not, in the slightest, pay heed to his opponents and should adhere to his propagation. He must not change his stance, however much they might push him. God is with him.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

إِنَّ الَّذِي فَرَضَ عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لَرَأْدُكَ إِلَىٰ مَعَادٍ ۖ قُلْ رَبِّي أَعْلَمُ مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَمَنْ هُوَ فِى ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٨٥﴾ وَمَا كُنْتَ تَرْجُو أَن يُلْقَىٰ إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابُ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً مِّنْ رَبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ ظَهِيرًا لِّلْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٨٦﴾ وَلَا يَصُدُّكَ عَنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ بَعْدَ إِذْ أَنزَلَتْ إِلَيْكَ وَادْعُ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾ وَلَا تَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ ۚ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۚ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ ۚ لَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾

Indeed, He Who has imposed the responsibility of the Qur'ān on you will definitely make you reach a good fate. Say: “My Lord fully knows who has brought God’s guidance and who is in manifest error.” (85)

And you never expected a Book to be revealed to you. This is but God’s grace and do not become one who helps these disbelievers. And let them not withhold you from God’s revelations when they have been sent down to you and call to your Lord and be not among the idolaters and do not invoke any other deity besides God. There is no deity except Him. Everything except His being is mortal. Judgment is in His Hands. And all of you will be returned to Him. (86-88)

80. He who earns a virtuous deed, for him is a better reward than it and he who earns an evil deed, then for such evil doers the recompense is equal to what they did.

Explanation

81 **إِنَّ الَّذِي فَرَضَ عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لَرَأْدُكَ إِلَى مَعَادٍ قُلْ رَبِّي أَعْلَمُ مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَمَنْ هُوَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ** ﴿٥١﴾

The word مَعَاد means “culmination, fate and place of return.” It occurs as an undefined noun in this verse to signify its scale and degree. For this reason, it means a grand fate and a majestic place of return.

After the topics discussed earlier, this verse sounds an assurance to the Prophet (sws): he should not the slightest pay heed to his opponents; He Who has imposed the obligation of this Qur’ān on him will help him out at every step in fulfilling it and will bless him with a grand fate in this world and in the next.

The word لَرَأْدُكَ carries a strong ring of decisiveness and certainty. In other words, the Prophet (sws) will reach this imposing culmination in spite of the chagrin of his opponents. The God Who granted success to all these messengers will grant him success too. The established practice of God about His messengers is unrelenting.

The words قُلْ رَبِّي أَعْلَمُ مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَمَنْ هُوَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ imply that the Prophet (sws) should stop engaging in debate with his opponents and make this final declaration to them that God knows full well who has brought His guidance and who has strayed in error. In other words, as far as reconciliation is concerned, he has fulfilled his obligation. Now he should consign the matter to God. He will decide who is rightly guided and who has gone astray. The word الْهُدَىٰ means “God’s guidance.” This has been explained at an appropriate place in this exegesis. If a person persists in going astray, even after receiving God’s guidance, then in fact such a person is openly in error. It is like losing one’s way in the light of the day.

82 **وَمَا كُنْتَ تَرْجُو أَنْ يُنْفِىَ إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابُ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً مِّنْ رَبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ ظَهِيرًا لِّلْكَافِرِينَ** ﴿٥٢﴾

This verse further explains what is alluded to above: The Prophet (sws) has not demanded from God to reveal this Book to him, so that after handing over all its responsibility to him God becomes aloof to it. It is actually God’s mercy because of which He has sent it down to him without his desire. Thus, he should rest assured that God will guide him at every step in the task He has chosen for him. And since this is a boon and not a bane, it’s consequence in the Prophet’s favour and those who accept it will be a source of mercy. If some ungrateful people are not giving it due importance, then they are only depriving themselves of God’s mercy.

Though the words فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ ظَهِيرًا لِّلْكَافِرِينَ are apparently addressed to the Prophet (sws), yet the admonition and rebuke in them is directed at people who were denying the Qur’ān. The implication is that the Prophet (sws) should faithfully deliver to people whatever he has received from God. If they want to soften him, he does not have any authority to change it. He is answerable to God and not to anyone else. If he slackens his stance for them, he will become their helper and facilitator. By directing these words to the Quraysh, the Almighty has warned the leaders of the Quraysh that if they have even a slight ray of hope in their hearts that they will be able to soften the Prophet (sws), then they should not even think about it materializing.

81. Indeed, He Who has imposed the responsibility of the Qur’ān on you will definitely make you reach a good fate. Say: “My Lord fully knows who has brought God’s guidance and who is in manifest error.”

82. And you never expected that a Book be revealed to you. This is but God’s grace and do not become one who helps these disbelievers.

It is evident from this verse that prophet hood and messenger hood is God's grant. It is only God who bestows it on whomsoever He wants and specially guides and instructs the person he chooses for this mission. This status is granted to a prophet without his desire or expectation and it is only God Who helps him in discharging its responsibilities. These people think that prophet hood is a manifestation of a person's latent abilities. Their view is totally wrong. *Insha'Allāh*, a detailed treatment of this topic will be given in the explanation of the last group's *sūrah*s.

The second thing which is evident from this verse is that, if a person is granted a status without his desire, the Almighty helps him specially in this task. On the other hand, if a person desires a status or position, then God consigns him to it. Narratives explain this aspect in a very effective way.⁸³

The third thing which is evident from this verse is that in the case of the Qur'ān, we must not tolerate any softness or compromise. If we do this, we will be regarded as the companions and helpers of wrongdoers.

84 ﴿وَلَا يَصُدُّكَ عَنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ بَعْدَ إِذْ أَنْزَلْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَأَدْعُ إِلَى رَبِّكَ وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الشُّرَكِيِّينَ﴾

This verse explains further in an emphatic way what has just been discussed: however much the opponents may exert force, they should not be able to stop the Prophet (sws) from God's revelations; he must say openly without any fear whatever they have aversion to; the revelations of God that have been revealed to him can be neither turned back nor snubbed; he is now responsible for communicating them; deviating from God's revelation once they have been sent down to him leads to the path of destruction.

The words ﴿وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الشُّرَكِيِّينَ﴾ state that the Prophet (sws) should call people to his Lord and not become among the idolaters. This address, too, is of a similar nature to that which was found in the previous verse. Here, it may be kept in mind that the greatest aversion that the leaders of the Quraysh had was for the call of monotheism. Hence, the verse stresses it the most and at the same time Muslims are warned that if they get over-awed by the opposition of the people and compromise on their stance about monotheism, then they, too, will become idolaters.

85 ﴿وَلَا تَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ لَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ﴾

Here, at the end, the belief of monotheism is expressed very emphatically so that any chance of compromise or reconciliation is ended. It is stated that they must not set up any other deity besides God. He alone is to be worshipped and none else. Everything except His Being is mortal. In His hands lies every decision and on the Day of Judgement everyone will return to Him; no one else.

With the grace of God today, Friday, at 10 am I come to the end of this *sūrah*'s exegesis. فالحمد لله (so, gratitude of God be on it).

Rahmānābad
29 March 1974

83. See, for example: al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-sahīh*, vol. 6, 2443, (no. 6248).

84. And let them not withhold you from God's revelations when they have been sent down to you and call to your Lord and be not among the idolaters and do not invoke any other deity besides God.

85. There is no deity except Him. Everything except His being is mortal. Judgement is in His Hands. And all of you will be returned to Him.